

The pregnant boy:

*The performance of pregnancy on the London stage,
1601-1625*

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University

Supervisor: Dr Gillian Russell

Mary Josephine McKenzie
October, 2001

The pregnant boy:

*The performance of pregnancy on the London stage,
1601-1625*

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Statement by candidate | i |
| Acknowledgments | ii |
| Abstract of Thesis | iii |
| Introduction: Pregnancy as Performance | 1 |
| Chapter One: Pregnancy as a Sign of Sin <i>Measure for Measure</i> (1604/5) | 31 |
| Chapter Two: Pregnancy as a Sign of Life or Death? <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i> (c 1601/5) | 53 |
| Chapter Three: Pregnancy as as State of Mind <i>The Winter's Tale</i> (1611) | 77 |
| Chapter Four: Pregnancy as Production <i>A Chaste Maid in Cheapside</i> (1613) | 103 |
| Chapter Five: Pregnancy as a Loss of Control <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> (1614) | 127 |
| Chapter Six : Pregnancy as Excess <i>Bartholomew Fair</i> (1614) | 151 |
| Chapter Seven : Pregnancy as a Dance <i>More Dissemblers Besides Women</i> (1615-1624) | 175 |
| Conclusion | 195 |
| Table of Works cited | 203 |

Statement by Candidate

I certify that this thesis is my own original work, carried out under the supervision of Dr Gillian Russell.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary McKenzie". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Mary" and the last name "McKenzie" written in a single continuous line.

Mary McKenzie

Tuesday, 9 October, 2001

Acknowledgments

This thesis took a long time to write and during that time a large number of people have helped me. I thank them all. First, I would like to thank the English Department—now part of the School of Humanities—in the Faculty of Arts at the Australian National University in Canberra. The staff in English have been helpful and supportive throughout the whole period. I also benefited from a grant in 1995-1996 to travel to the United Kingdom, where I researched medical texts and material relating to the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre.

Dr Gillian Russell, my supervisor, has been a constant source of insightful advice and enthusiastic support. She has helped me enormously, both in developing my ideas and in expressing them. She always made time to meet me to discuss progress or problems. She was vigilant in looking out for potentially useful material, bought me books, lent me books and copied material for me. She returned drafts quickly and, as well as providing detailed comments, she suggested ways to improve the structure and make arguments flow better. And she found ways to express criticism without dampening my enthusiasm. I cannot thank her enough.

I would like to thank the other members of my panel: Dr Axel Clarke and, briefly, Dr Jon Mee, and also Fred Langman. Professor Iain Wright and Graeme Cullum made useful suggestions. Many other postgraduate students in the English Department offered comments, suggested references, provided friendship or gave moral support by successfully completing their own theses. In particular, I would like to thank Kathy Barnes, Dr Jane Campbell, Paul Campbell, Rachel Cunneen, Sarah Engledow, Dr David Free, Dr Christiane Gerblinger, Dr Belinda Lee, Dr Justine Molony and Dr Shen Yuanfang. I would also like to thank Maureen Bettle of the University of Canberra for her interest and suggestions.

Anyone who knows me will recognise the contribution made to my thesis by John McKenzie, who has given me support and encouragement throughout. I have been able to take advantage of his interest in, and love of, the plays of Shakespeare, developed over a lifetime, and his enthusiasm to join me in my exploration of other early modern playwrights, early modern medical texts and scholarly criticism of early modern theatre. He has listened to arguments as they developed over a long time, suggesting refinements and clarifications. He has read and re-read drafts and brought his formidable drafting skills to play in suggesting structural changes. He has been invaluable in helping me with final proof-reading and editing. Overall, as well as his intellectual and practical assistance, he has made sure that the process of producing the thesis remained enjoyable. I would also like to thank Kirsty McKenzie, Dr Stephen McKenzie, Louise Kleinig, my sisters and brothers and my friends for their interest and encouragement over the years.

As for any ambiguities, defects, enormities, monstrosities or gaps in my argument, I can truly say: Of these, I am the only begetter.

Mary McKenzie
October, 2001

Abstract of Thesis

My thesis examines the acting of pregnant women by boy apprentices in London, between 1601 and 1625. It is original in linking two areas which have not been discussed together, although each one has received close attention from scholars: the representation of women by boys, and the representation of pregnancy in the drama. My thesis examines seven plays with roles for pregnant women which draw on and confirm early modern uncertainties about misdiagnosis of pregnancy, uncontrolled behaviour in pregnant women and the dangers of miscarriage, spontaneous abortion, maternal death and infant mortality. The plays also highlight contentious aspects of courtship, marriage formation and marital duties, paternity, property rights and succession, to provide dramatic tension which was heightened, I argue, because of the boys who performed the pregnant women.

All stage pregnancies are likely to be prosthetic. Where a boy played a pregnant woman on the early modern stage, the pregnancy was not simply prosthetic but, of necessity, impossible. A boy lacked the internal womb and birth canal which early modern medical authorities stressed as essential for a true pregnancy. As scholars have argued, where boy actors played women, disguised as men, there was a friction, oscillation or sense of theatrical vibrancy to which the boy actor contributed, unavailable if the role was performed by a woman. The sexual tension in transvestite disguise plot plays was further heightened by the early modern homologous model of sexual difference, in which women have undescended men's genitals. As a woman required different genitals to a man's during pregnancy, the sexual indeterminacy of the boy/ woman/ boy was complicated further by a sense of procreative indeterminacy. The boys in pregnant roles had the potential to cast over every stage pregnancy a general aura of distrust, which playwrights enhanced by *double entendre* and emphasis on the boy's body, sufficiently often to complicate any message about pregnancy or women which appeared to exist at the dramatic level. One potential implication would have been that the outcome of any stage pregnancy would be monstrous but, in several plays, a stage pregnancy leads to the birth of a normal child. Another potential effect was to imply that the pregnancy itself was false, adding complexity and ambiguity to all plays where the legitimacy of a woman's pregnancy is in doubt. The question whether a pregnancy is true or false is complicated by the fact that an early modern stage pregnancy was, of necessity, always false. These issues are worked out differently in different plays.

The boy actor became increasingly important in successive plays because of an increased emphasis on the physical body of the pregnant woman. Paradoxically, parallel to the increase in references to pregnancy as a physical condition, it became to be used increasingly as a metaphor for theatre, not to identify benign or fruitful outcomes for the characters but demonstrating the qualities of ambiguity, transgression and monstrosity in early modern attacks against the theatre. My conclusion is that the playing of pregnancy by boy actors contributed substantially to the distancing of pregnancy from the physical and also to the growing interest in metatheatricality which developed over the same period. Because, increasingly, the meaning of the drama depended on the playing of pregnancy by a boy, the result was to reinforce the exclusion of women from the early modern stage through the material practice of representing them by boys.

Introduction

Pregnancy as performance

The pregnant boy's dance

In Thomas Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women*, Sinquapace, a dancing master, is teaching a page how to dance.¹ The page (who is known only as Antonio), is a woman and is the mistress of Lactantio, who knows, with the audience, what other characters, including the dancing master, do not. She is pregnant. Antonio has been successful in concealing her pregnancy, although a page's outfit might be thought to reveal, rather than disguise it.² Earlier in the play, Lactantio anticipates the time when it will become harder to conceal the fact that his mistress is 'with child':

I must devise some shift when she grows big,
Those masculine hose will shortly prove too little. (III.i.23-24)

Until she falls during an attempt to dance and calls for a midwife (V.i.224), other characters in the play accept Antonio as the boy she pretends to be. It is only at the very last moment that the watchers on stage realise their mistake. Sinquapace says: 'A midwife? by this light, the boy's with child!' (V.i.225). Rather than identifying the page as a woman, he continues: 'A miracle! some woman is the father' (V.i.226). At a performance in the early part of the seventeenth century, this success in maintaining a boyish image in such unlikely circumstances could not have failed to draw attention to the boy apprentice actor, in the theatrical company of the King's Men, who played the role of Antonio. The actor performing pregnancy was also acting the role of a boy being taught how to perform. The boy learning how to perform was performing the role of a pregnant woman disguised as a boy. Thus brought to audience attention, the boy actor took part in a complicated and ridiculous dance with Antonio and the disguised gentlewoman.

¹ Quotations from *More Dissemblers* are from A. H. Bullen (ed. and intro.), *The Works of Thomas Middleton* (London, 1885; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1964), Vol. VI, 376-481.

I have used modern versions of the plays I discuss in this thesis, although quotations from other early modern texts such as pregnancy manuals are, where possible, from the first texts published, in the original spelling but with some silent modernisation of type. I do not intend to suggest by this practice that I regard the dramatic works as existing in a historic vacuum, thus differing from other early modern material which is a product of the culture, as if to suggest, for example, that 'Shakespeare speaks for all time'. But I note that many other writers on early modern drama use recent editions of the plays they discuss and I am conscious that readers are likely to be most familiar with the plays in modern editions. A reader who does not have access to the original texts will also find it more difficult to locate quotations, especially where the original versions did not have scene divisions within Acts. It is also hard for a reader accustomed to line numbers to locate quotations when these are absent. I will provide publication details, and details of the edition from which I quote, for plays other than *More Dissemblers*, as they are first mentioned, in most cases at the end of this Introduction. Unless otherwise indicated, references to Introductions, Introductory Notes, footnotes, marginal notes etc. are to those editions. Details of first publication and early performances of each play are provided in the chapter dealing with that play. If such details are relevant earlier, they are noted at that point, and repeated in the relevant chapter.

² *Dramatis Personae*. No woman's name is supplied for the disguised woman, known only as 'Antonio', or by descriptions such as 'the page', 'the boy' or 'the gentlewoman'. I call her 'Antonio' and, as with all the women whose roles I discuss, I use 'she' for the character and 'he' for the actor playing her.

According to Michael Shapiro, Antonio is the only role in early modern drama for a pregnant woman disguised as a boy.³ *More Dissemblers* thus provides the ultimate in comic transvestite disguise plots in a tradition including William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.⁴ In its presentation of pregnancy, as the most difficult problem of all to be overcome in successfully disguising a woman as a man, *More Dissemblers* also draws attention to the theatrical representation of pregnancy by a boy actor, the subject of my thesis. My aim is to remedy a surprising lack of critical attention to the 'boys with child', the young male actors on whose bodies the condition of pregnancy was represented on the early modern stage.

My project began with the realisation that there was virtually nothing written which deals with a boy actor playing a pregnant woman. There are some random comments about whether boy actors wore padding when they played pregnant women.⁵ The most extended treatment concerns *More Dissemblers* where recent critics have focused on disguise and its homoerotic implications, rather than on Antonio's pregnancy.⁶ The presence of the boy actor is also noted in a discussion of women's speech in *The Winter's Tale*.⁷ Otherwise, there is no critical analysis of the playing of pregnancy by boys, and the pregnant boy remains a shadowy figure. The absence of scholarly attention to the performance of pregnancy by boy players is surprising, given that pregnant women characters are not unusual in plays from this period. In addition to the seven plays I discuss, there are other plays from the early seventeenth century, to which I will refer later in this Introduction, in which pregnancy is acted on-stage. I thought, initially, that the failure of feminists to examine the performance of pregnancy by boys might be because to do so could only serve to reinforce more negative and limiting early modern attitudes towards women, as necessary only for procreation. But, as discussed below, pregnancy in the drama has received a good deal of critical attention from feminist scholars, some of whom identify exactly these negative or limiting attitudes towards women. Thus, their failure to consider that the pregnant women they discuss were all performed by boy players cannot simply be attributed to a desire to examine women in other than a stereotypical 'breeding' role.

Some of the most influential scholars who have written about pregnancy and women's bodies in the drama have also written about boy actors but have discussed the two subjects separately. Lisa Jardine, for example, writes about pregnancy and about boy actors, but she does not deal specifically with the performance by boys of

³ *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 52-56, at 55.

⁴ That dramatists and audiences did not see *More Dissemblers* as exhausting the transvestite heroine is evident from Appendix B in *Gender in Play* (221-223). 33 plays are listed after *More Dissemblers*, the last in 1642, James Shirley's *The Sisters for the King's Men*.

⁵ Juliet Dusinberre, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 231-27, comments about the acting of pregnancy but does not discuss the implications for perceptions of pregnancy of representing it on a boy's body. W. Robertson Davies explored the question whether the boys wore padding to make their pregnancy visual as well as verbal without any analysis of how this may have influenced the representation of pregnancy. See *Shakespeare's Boy Actors* (London: J. M. Dent, 1939), 73.

⁶ I provide details in Chapter Seven on *More Dissemblers*.

⁷ Lynn Enterline, "'You speak a language that I understand not': The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter's Tale*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48: 1 (Spring, 1997), 17-44. I discuss her comments in Chapter Three on *The Winter's Tale*.

pregnancy.⁸ Stephen Orgel discusses the performance of gender and provides an extensive analysis of both boy actors and early modern gynaecology and obstetrics; but he does not discuss the representation of pregnancy on stage.⁹ There is no reference to the performance of pregnancy by boys in Dymphna Callaghan's *Shakespeare Without Women*, a study which provides many powerful insights into the boys in female parts and early modern ideas about the female body.¹⁰ And in a recent New Casebook about *The Duchess of Malfi*, Callaghan starts her Introduction with the reminder that Richard Sharpe performed the Duchess in early performances.¹¹ She argues that *The Duchess of Malfi* 'is part of a cultural debate about female sexuality, marriage, and especially widowhood, repeatedly staged in Jacobean theatre' (3). Later in the Introduction, when Callaghan discusses the pregnancy of the Duchess, Richard Sharpe has faded into the background. Stephen Greenblatt examines early modern notions of sexual difference and boy actors but the roles to which he refers are the cross-dressed heroines of comedy, the subject of much of the critical analysis of the boys who played women.¹²

For the rest of this Introduction, I will provide a brief introduction to historical material which is relevant to early performances and to early modern pregnancy and then outline some of the issues identified by scholars about boy actors and about pregnant women. The plays I discuss in this thesis were first performed by the major theatrical companies, in which women's roles were played by boy apprentices.¹³ The effect of boys in women's roles in the adult companies is something about which scholars do not agree, as discussed below. There is a fair amount of historical material about these boy actors and a vast amount of recent scholarly discussion.¹⁴ As more information becomes available, assumptions that have been made to create a consistent picture must be abandoned.¹⁵ T. W. Baldwin, in 1927, assumed that, as apprentices to adult actors, boys started at ten and continued in female and juvenile roles until seventeen, graduating to adult roles at twenty-one. Based on this assumption, he prepared charts naming actors and the parts they played in early

⁸ *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Sussex: Harvester Press: 1983). Jardine discusses pregnancy at 131 and boy actors at 9-35.

⁹ *Impersonations: The performance of gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ *Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

¹¹ *The Duchess of Malfi* (London and New York: Macmillan, 2000; first published in the United States by St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1-23, at 1.

¹² *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1988). Greenblatt discusses boy actors in 'Fiction and Friction', 66-93.

¹³ Details of the plays and performance dates are provided later in this Introduction in the section headed 'Structure of Thesis'.

¹⁴ For information about the organisation of the adult companies, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). See also G. E. Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); and *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Dramatic Companies and Players* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941-1968, 7 Vols).

¹⁵ Gurr describes the result of assembling fragments with 'fuzzy edges' to make a big picture, as 'a soft mosaic or a fragmentary jigsaw puzzle' (1).

modern plays.¹⁶ His conclusions are now rejected (Bentley, *Profession of Player*, 119). It is agreed that the boys were apprenticed to older actors, men who usually held shares in the theatrical company. There was no guild of actors. But many actors were members of other guilds and sometimes the boy would be 'officially apprenticed to an actor who was a member of one of the London guilds but trained his apprentice to act in his company's plays, rather than in the business of a grocer or a goldsmith' (Bentley, 119-125). But as Andrew Gurr points out, some actors who were not members of any guild also trained apprentices (*Shakespearean Playing Companies*, 100).

In any case, a period of apprenticeship in a trade guild may not have been envisaged as a time during which the apprentice would play female roles. Apprenticeship records do not demonstrate any uniform pattern about the boys' ages or how long they acted in women's roles.¹⁷ Bentley describes periods ranging from three to twelve years; and he calculated that a boy was at his acting peak, for between three and eight years (117, 120-122). Gurr argues that the laws for apprentices in the trades fixed twenty-four as the minimum age to complete the apprenticeship with an average commencing age of about seventeen and that these ages are inappropriate for a boy to perform successfully as a woman (100).

Gurr's comment raises two questions. The first is: At what age is it appropriate for a boy to play a woman? The answer must depend almost exclusively on cultural assumptions about theatre, womanhood and boys. The second question is: In a society that accepted boys as women on stage, at what age would it become inappropriate for a boy to play a woman? Again the answer depends on cultural assumptions, probably based on the expectation that a sexually immature boy is more like a woman than one who has reached sexual maturity and that great size is incompatible with womanhood. A very general estimate is that early modern English boys completed puberty at around the age of eighteen and that some boys of this age would be quite small.¹⁸ In any case, height could be compatible with female beauty. Sara F. Matthews Grieco notes that a list of the attributes of female beauty in sixteenth century Italy includes long legs.¹⁹ In *Epicoene* (1609), Jonson has his character, True-Wit, identify being short as a 'defect' in women. Orgel has commented that the ideal of 'aristocratic womanhood, was what we would call boyish and they called womanly, slim-hipped and flat chested' (*Impersonations*, 69-70).

¹⁶ T. W. Baldwin, *The organization and personnel of the Shakespearean company* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961; first published 1927). Baldwin explains the basis for allocating roles in Shakespeare's plays in Chapter IX and provides actor lists in Tables facing page 229.

¹⁷ Trigg, who claimed to have been apprenticed for twelve years in 1626 (to learn acting), is listed in the cast list for *The Roman Actor* by Massinger, which was licensed in 1626 but his last recorded female role appears to be in *The Swisser*, by Arthur Wilson, in 1631. See Bentley, *Profession of Player*, 262.

¹⁸ For information relevant to the size and development of boy actors, see J. M. Tanner, *A history of the study of human growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For twentieth century comparisons, see Zvi Laron, 'Puberty', *Encyclopaedia of Human Biology* (New York and London: Academic Press, 1991), Vol. 6, 339-344.

¹⁹ Sara F. Matthews Grieco 'The Body, Appearance and Sexuality', Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (eds), *A History of Women in the West*, Vol. III, *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 46-84 at 58-59.

Modern studies of human growth avoid the age at which a boy's voice breaks as evidence of sexual maturity as imprecise and far less useful than the appearance of pubic hair and genitalia (Tanner, 94). But a manly voice is a potential bar to the effective representation of women on stage, as Hamlet points out in his comments to one of the players: 'By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring'.²⁰ For Hamlet, it appears, the boy's greater height is not a source of concern in itself, but draws attention to his increasing age and the possibility that his voice has broken. It appears that some boys may have kept unbroken voices until their very late teens.²¹ Callaghan, in *Shakespeare Without Women*, explores the implications of the unbroken voice for boy actors in the context of economic and sexual practices that 'molded the boys aesthetically, if not surgically, into the shape of eunuchs' (67). But as Jean E. Howard reminds us, 'the cross-dressed Viola, the woman who can sing both high and low and who is loved by a woman *and* by a man, is a figure who can be read as putting in question the notion of fixed sexual difference'.²²

My starting point is that where men were acted by men, a woman would not have been acted by a boy so childish that his appearance overrode all aspects of plot development, so that the whole theatrical experience was ludicrous; and that this would have applied even more strongly when the woman was supposed to be pregnant. In the children's companies, such as the Blackfriars Boys and the Children of the Chapel, an adult manager controlled a group of boys who played all the parts, female and male, young and old. There would be less disparity between the sex of the boy and the character he played in such a performance because boys also acted as men. The popularity of the children's companies from 1600 to about 1613 indicates both that an early modern audience could enjoy a theatrical performance that lacked any claims to realism and also that their experience of seeing women acted on stage was not uniform. If, as has been argued, some boys in children's companies stayed on to act after they matured to 'youths', it appears likely they played male roles with the newer recruits taking the women's roles, constituting yet another mix of bodies and thus allowing for yet another different theatrical experience.²³

Nor was the practice of boys acting as women so exclusive that audience members never had an opportunity to see women act as women or, at least, to hear about it. The audience at public theatres, like the Globe, and private theatres, like the Blackfriars, included ambassadors and travellers, who had seen women act overseas. When companies presented plays at court, the audience included some women who themselves 'performed' in masques; and the whole court was accustomed to seeing

²⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus (eds and intro.), *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 1659-1759, (2.2.408-411).

²¹ A study of records of Bach's Leipzig choristers between 1727 and 1749, cited in Tanner, found that the age at which boys sang alto parts, in transition between the sopranos and the adult male voices, was around 16½ to 17 years; in 1744, the youngest alto was 15 years and the oldest was 19 years (95); during a period of poverty and lack of nutrition, the age rose by about six months per year. S. F. Daw, 'Age of boys' puberty in Leipzig 1727-49 as indicated by voice breaking in J. S. Bach's choir members', *Human Biology* 42, 87-89, quoted in Tanner, 95-97.

²² 'Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England', Lesley Ferris (ed. and intro.), *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on cross-dressing* (London and New York: 1993), 20-48, at 32.

²³ See Shen Lin, 'How Old Were The Children of Pauls', *Theatre Notebook*, XLV:3 (1991), 121-131.

women representing female characters, or characteristics, in this genre. The reference to the dance of the satyrs in *The Winter's Tale* indicates an interest in linking the genres.²⁴ Women also appeared occasionally on the London stage. Orgel notes the appearance of Moll Frith in 1611, at the Fortune, and French actresses in the 1620s.²⁵

My discussion examines, where relevant, the views of the antitheatrical critics.²⁶ Stephen Gosson,²⁷ Phillip Stubbes²⁸ and John Rainoldes²⁹ in the late sixteenth century; and William Prynne³⁰ in 1633, made broadly based attacks on the theatre, linking it with other dangerous pastimes like bowling or dicing. They argued that theatres encouraged lust, both in the content of plays and the opportunities provided for sexual contacts to be formed between members of the audience. They were also concerned that the boy actors, and the men who watched them, would become effeminate.

I am not aware of specific complaints by the antitheatricalists about boys representing pregnant women.³¹ However, Jonas Barish comments in a discussion of attacks by Prynne on players and plays, that the evil involved in playing was that players tried 'to substitute a self of their own contriving for the one given to them by God' and that plays 'attempt to substitute "notorious lying fables" (Sig. X2^v), in Prynne's phrase, for things that have truly happened....Plays, like players, threaten God's primacy by challenging his uniqueness; they attempt to wrest from him his most

²⁴ In Act 4, scene 2, a servant says of the dancers who will dance as satyrs at the shepherd's festival that "One three of them, by their own report sir, hath danced before the King' (4.4.324-325). It is suggested that the same players danced in Jonson's *Oberon* at court. Orgel says that the King's Men probably took the professional roles in the masque. See Orgel (ed. and intro.), *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, published as an Oxford World Classics paperback), 4.4.333, fn. and 79-80.

²⁵ See Orgel, *Impersonations*, 1-9, for comments on women actresses.

²⁶ Their works and other works defending the stage have been reprinted in several series: Garland Publishing produced 'The English stage: attack and defense, 1577-1730', with prefaces by Arthur Freeman; Johnson Reprints produced the 'Theatrum Redivivum' series, with Introductory notes by J. W. Binns and by Peter Davidson; some antitheatrical works have been reprinted in a series called 'The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books' published by Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Da Capo Press.

²⁷ *The Schoole of Abuse* (London, 1579; fac. rpt. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1973); *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (Oxford, 1582; fac. rpt. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1974). Gosson, a former playwright, implies in a way that is not evident in the works of Rainoldes, Stubbes and Prynne, that to be writing against the theatre is not significantly different from writing for it.

²⁸ *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London, 1583; fac. rpt. New York: Da Capo Press and Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1972; English Experience series, Vol. 489).

²⁹ John Rainolds and William Gager, *Th' overthrow of Stage-Playes, By the way of controversie betwixt D. Gager and D. Rainoldes ...* (Oxford: 1599; fac. rpt. New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1974).

³⁰ *Histrionastix: The Players Scourge, or Actors Tragædie* (London, 1633; fac. rpt., New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1974).

³¹ There is a passage in Rainoldes in which he discusses reports of Nero playing men's and women's roles. His focus is on how far playing would be acceptable if it was not done for gain. In the course of his discussion he tells of a soldier who, when asked what Nero was doing, replied 'Hee is travailing with child'. If this means that Nero played a pregnant woman, Rainoldes makes no comment about it as especially offensive.

inimitable attribute, his demiurgy'.³² For a play to depict the state of pregnancy would thus appear to be doubly offensive in substituting, for the method ordained by God, a devilish form of begetting children. The thought may have been so horrific that the antitheatricalists could not bring themselves to address it specifically.

One of the concerns, expressed repeatedly by critics of the theatre, was that stage transvestism was contrary to the Biblical prohibition against wearing the clothes of the opposite sex.³³ Rainoldes, for example, argued:

...the lawe of God which forbiddeth a man to put on Womans raiment; a thing though not distaining all stage-playes, yet welnigh all (Sig. B4^v-C^r).

Gosson, in *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* makes a similar comment (Sig. E3^v). Transvestism is only one form of disguise which is attacked: 'For a meane person to take upon him the title of a Prince with counterfeit poste, and traine, is by outwarde signes to shewe them selves otherwise then they are, and so with in the compasse of a lye....' (Sig. E5^v). This applied also to adopting a woman's actions or voice:

Outward signes consist eyther in words or gestures, to declare our selves either by words or by gestures to be otherwise then we are, is an act executed where it should not, therefore a lye. (Sig. E5^r)

For Prynne, the third aspect of stage-playes to be condemned is 'the apparell in which they are acted' which is 'womanish and effeminate, belonging properly to the femall sex' (Sig. Aa^v-Aa2^r). Prynne, also, cites Deuteronomy 22. Men acting in women's parts in women's apparell is contrary to the word of the Lord. As all, or most, plays involve men acting in women's parts in women's apparell; all plays are 'sinfull, yea, abominable vnto Christians' (Sig. Aa2^r).

The antitheatricalists saw clothing as itself evil, potentially softening to the male body and capable of transforming women into whores. Stubbes, who deals with the dishonesty and dangers of 'playes and enterludes' in a section towards the end of *The Anatomie of Abuses* devotes a large section of his work to:

Pride of Apparell.....wearyng of Apparell more gorgeous, sumptuous & precious than our state, callyng or condition of lyfe requireth, whereby we are puffed up into pride... (Sig. Bvii^r)

Theatre was associated with sumptuous garments because the actors wore lavish costumes and through links between the theatres and the clothing trade.³⁴ Clothes were also an identifying sign of rank or status, or of a trade or calling. The sumptuary laws, limiting the wearing of certain materials or styles of clothing, were repealed in 1604 (Orgel, *Impersonations*, 98), but it was still expected that ordinary

³² *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, Cal., Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1981), 80-131, at 93.

³³ See Deuteronomy, 22:5:

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments. In the King James Version (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1977), 131.

³⁴ See Peter Stallybrass, 'Worn worlds: clothes and identity on the Renaissance stage', Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan and Stallybrass (eds and intro.), *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 289-320, especially 292-316, at 295. See also Jean McIntyre, *Costumes And Scripts in the Elizabethan Theatres* (Edmonton: Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 87.

people would not ape their betters by wearing lavish attire. Accompanying the concerns about the falsity of a transvestite all-male stage were concerns about women in early modern society who adopted men's clothing, even where this was not intended to disguise the sex of the wearer.³⁵

The charges of the antitheatricalists did not go unanswered but the effectiveness of the defence was limited by the scope of the debate. When theatre was attacked as lewd or vicious, the only available response for supporters like Thomas Lodge or Thomas Heywood was to deny the charges.³⁶ Heywood argued, simultaneously, for constant audience awareness of the boy actor and its ability to forget the boy during the performance.³⁷ He denied that transvestism in the theatre encouraged sodomy because no man 'that hath in him any taste or relish of Christianity, ...[could] be guilty of so abhorred a sinne'. Biblical proscriptions against transvestism were not meant to apply to plays (Sig. C3^r-C3^v). He did not wish to deceive the world by keeping young people, of either sex, disguised in the clothes of the opposite sex, to conceal them from their fathers or tutors:

But to see our youths attired in the habit of women, who knowes not what their intents be? who cannot distinguish them by their names, assuredly knowing, they are but to represent such a Lady, at such a time appoynted? (Sig. C3^v)

Heywood appears to have written *An Apology for Actors* around 1608 although it was not published until 1612 and it is not clear what sparked his defence.³⁸ The antitheatricalists were apparently quiet in the first decade of the seventeenth century, although the city authorities continued with their attempts to control the theatre.³⁹ Heywood's work gave rise to *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors*, in 1615, a vigorous but plagiaristic attack based partly on Gosson's *Playes Confuted*.⁴⁰

There is a reminder in the pattern of defences provoking attacks, of the 'formal controversy' and some other early seventeenth century works about 'the woman question', described by Linda Woodbridge.⁴¹ She describes the sixteenth century 'formal controversy', where attacks on and defences of women were treated as an exercise in formal debates, with attacks and defences sometimes written by the same person, so that: '...mysogynistic attacks on women were responses to defenses of women and not the other way around, that the purpose of attacks and defences was

³⁵ The phenomenon of 'manlike women', who wore skirts but upper garments styled like those of a man and men's hats is discussed briefly in Chapters Three and Six.

³⁶ Lodge's work may have been called *Honest excuses*. See Introductory note by Davidson to Lodge's 'Reply to Gosson' (rpt. New York and London: Johnson Reprints, 1972). The work is included in the same volume as *The epistle exhortatory of an English Christian*, by Henry Stallybryde (John Bale), and appears after it, preceded by the short Introductory note. Gosson responded to Lodge in *An Apologie of the School of Abuse*, which was attached to his work, *The Ephemerides of Phialo* (London, 1579; rpt. New York and London: Garland Publishing Company, 1973).

³⁷ *An Apology For Actors* (London, 1612; rpt. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1973).

³⁸ See preface by Freeman, 5.

³⁹ There do not appear to be any works from 1600 to 1615 attacking theatre in the series published by Garland or Jonson Publishing.

⁴⁰ I. G., *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors* (London, 1615, rpt. in the same Volume as *An Apology For Actors*). Freeman notes that I. G. may be John Greene or Green, but doubts the attribution.

⁴¹ *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1984).

(from at least one perspective) the same' (7-8).⁴² She identifies the same pattern in some early seventeenth century works, for example, Barnabe Rich, who wrote *The Excellencie of Good Women* in 1613, had previously written *Faultes, fault, and nothing else but faultes*, 'a nonformal attack on women and other unworthies' in 1606 (76-77).

The pregnant boy's space

In this section I examine the views of scholars about boy actors and about pregnancy in the drama to contextualise my thesis in relation to existing scholarship. Over the last twenty-five to thirty years, there has been a great deal of interest, by scholars of early modern drama, in assessing the impact and significance of boy actors in women's roles. The change in emphasis and tone can be summarised by comparing the conclusions of Juliet Dusinberre and Callaghan. In 1975, Dusinberre argued that the use of boys to play women, and the highlighting of this in plays involving transvestite cross-dressing, freed women characters from the accepted behaviour patterns for their sex, thus allowing the 'real nature' of women to be demonstrated, while also potentially subverting traditional gender concepts of masculinity and femininity.⁴³ In 2000, Callaghan argued that an aesthetic of representation was developed through the use of boy actors which expressed sexual difference in terms of the presence or lack of male genitalia.

Visible and audible sexual difference, that is, femininity, on the early modern stage....was defined in and as a relation to masculinity and bore only a troublesome and secondary commensurability with women.⁴⁴

In between, scholars developed and refined arguments, extending and disputing the views of their predecessors. Often, their comments about boy actors form only part of a work on early modern drama and sometimes what is presented repeats or refines views which originally appeared in scholarly journals. Articles or chapters from other works are also included in anthologies, so that the process can never be considered simply in terms of chronological development. Further, the discussion of boy actors has coincided with a more extensive series of changes and developments in feminism as a body of theory and a contemporary cultural practice and also in feminist analyses of early modern drama. Perceptions about the exclusion of women from the drama, through the practice of using boys to represent them, have also been complicated by the development of, and changes in, queer theory, and by the availability of more historical information and analysis of homoeroticism and same-sex practices in early modern society. So the change from Dusinberre to Callaghan cannot simply be explained by an analysis of arguments about boy actors. In this thesis there is no scope to do more than hint at some of the developments.

As I have said, there has not been any sustained interest in boy actors playing pregnancy but the representation of women and women's bodies in the drama has been extensively analysed. Increased interest in reading works into the cultural context in which they were first performed led first to concern by feminists, for example Carol Neely, that the effect of both new historicism and cultural materialism

⁴² She also notes that Renaissance attacks on women are more congenial to modern feminism than are Renaissance defenses of women.

⁴³ *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*, 232.

⁴⁴ *Shakespeare Without Women*, 51.

(which she described as ‘cult historicism’), had been to oppress women, repress sexuality, and subordinate gender issues.⁴⁵ Other feminists disagreed. Kathleen McLuskie, for example, warned against the dangers of interpretation ‘as a reflection of our own political dreams and nightmares’, arguing in favour of interpretations that recognised the material and cultural circumstances in which women operated.⁴⁶ Neely expressed her concern in 1988. Since then, there has been a vast array of feminist historicist exploration of the drama through contemporary legal, religious and medical discourses, and also building on the work of feminist historians who have sought to retrieve, from virtual obscurity, the lives of early modern women, especially women of middle and lower rank. The result is an understanding of the variety and complexity of early modern women’s lives, which gives more scope for Neely’s goal: the ‘over-reading’ of texts to find ‘women’s resistance or even subversion’ (15). But dominant early modern attitudes, towards women’s speech, for example, mean that discerning strength is always likely to have a negative implication. There has also been more emphasis on the drama as it was performed, a much more extensive topic than the practice of representing women by boys, and on theatrical companies as commercial ventures and sites of cultural exchange.

In *Still Harping On Daughters*, in 1983, Jardine criticised Dusiinberre’s argument, that women’s essential nature could be revealed by a cross-dressed woman character played by a boy, while gender restrictions were exposed. Dusiinberre expressed the opinion that: ‘Shakespeare saw men and women as equal in a world that declared them unequal’.⁴⁷ Jardine was equally critical of arguments, by scholars such as R. Smith and Coppélia Kahn, that Shakespeare’s society was excessively chauvinistic.⁴⁸ Jardine was concerned that both strands of argument, despite their great differences, treated ‘Shakespeare’s characters as susceptible of analysis as *people*’; either as rounded people in whom an astute critic can find ‘emancipated insights that earlier criticism has missed’ or through a belief that psychoanalytic interpretations ‘lay bare a timeless conflict between male and female sexuality’ (6). She concluded that the presence of boy actors in women’s parts was potentially pervasive, although usually unimportant, and that audience awareness of the boy actors did not normally occur in tragedy.⁴⁹ I find her concept of ‘reference point’ useful, to describe the occasions

⁴⁵ ‘Constructing the Subject: Feminist Practice and the New Renaissance Discourses’, *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988), 5–18, at 7. Writing about the same time as Neely, Walter Cohen criticised the practice of new historicism on almost opposite grounds: the use by Greenblatt of the gynaecological texts led to ‘a kind of synechdoche in which a single text or a group of texts stands in for all texts and thus exhausts the discursive field’. See ‘Political Criticism of Shakespeare’, Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O’Connor (eds and intro.), *Shakespeare reproduced: The text in history and ideology* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 18–45, at 38.

⁴⁶ *Renaissance Dramatists* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 224–230, at 228.

⁴⁷ Jardine, 2 quotes Dusiinberre at 308.

⁴⁸ R. Smith, ‘“A heart cleft in twain”: The dilemma of Shakespeare’s Gertrude’, Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Neely (eds), *The Woman’s Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980) 194–210; and Coppélia Kahn, *Man’s Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, Cal., 1981). In the Introduction to *Still Harping*, Jardine expressed her view that the plays of Shakespeare demonstrated ‘patriarchy’s unexpressed worry about the great social changes which characterise the period—worries which could be made conveniently concrete in the voluminous and endemic debates about “the woman question”’ (6).

⁴⁹ Jardine excepts from this general rule the role of the Queen in Christopher Marlowe’s *Edward II*, because in that play, homoerotic attraction is a feature of the relationship between Richard and Gaveston (23).

when the boy's body was used by playwrights, for dramatic irony, or more serious *double entendre* when a boy 'plays a woman's part' (12). Jardine's assessment that the boy actors, far from allowing insights into women, emphasised the maleness of the disguised women and thus their male rather than female eroticism, is a useful starting point rather than a conclusion for discussing pregnancy acted by a boy (24).

While there is a range of opinions about how far to take Jardine's assessment, many critics appear to accept her distinction between comedy and tragedy and to attach most importance to the erotic ambiguity and confusion of cross-dressed heroines in comedy.⁵⁰ In 1988, McLuskie argued that 'the boy actresses could not be "like any convention in any art form"' because theatre and boys were, 'a source of anxiety and heated debate' but she noted what she saw as an over-emphasis on performance over narrative, in the work of critics like Jardine:

the fictions of Elizabethan drama would have been rendered nonsensical if at every appearance of a female character...their gender was called into question.⁵¹

McLuskie concluded that in romantic comedies, discussions about femininity and the role of transvestite disguise invites, as it simultaneously denies, a metatheatrical awareness of the boy actor playing the woman (123). But the theatrical representation of women cannot be considered simply as a matter of biology and must also take gender roles into account (125); and it can be reductive to try to assimilate complex matters of Elizabethan morality into the discourses of scientific sexologists of the twentieth century (127). Howard agrees about the minimal impact of boy actors in women's roles because otherwise, 'audience involvement with dramatic narratives premised on heterosexual love and masculine/ feminine difference would have been minimal' but she also believes that 'the convention of the boy actor playing a girl can, at any moment, be unmasked as a convention and the reality (that the fictional woman is played by a boy) can be revealed'.⁵² Her focus on cross-dressed women off-stage is useful in demonstrating the links between the representation of a hierarchical sex-gender system and money (38).

Phyllis Rackin assesses the idea of gender as a kind of costume, doubly problematic when heroines dressed as boys.⁵³ She stresses the need to examine the complex

⁵⁰ See Catherine Belsey 'Disrupting sexual difference: meaning and gender in the comedies', John Drakakis (ed.), *Alternative Shakespeares* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), Vol. 1, 166-190, especially 180-189. Belsey attributed only a very limited importance to the fact that women were played by boys, but was occasionally significant, allowing a glimpse of sexual difference as in *As You Like It*. The effect is to disrupt sexual difference, not to a form of bisexuality but to allow for each person a plurality of 'possible beings in the margins of sexual difference' (189).

⁵¹ 'The Act, the Role, and the Actor: Boy Actresses on the Elizabethan Stage', *New Theatre Quarterly* 3:10 (May 1987), 120-130, at 120-121. The female characters identified by McLuskie, as examples where attention to the sex of the actor would render the performance nonsensical, were the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi* and Ursula the pig woman in *Bartholomew Fair*. In Chapters Five and Six, I argue that the Duchess of Malfi, and Ursula the pig woman, have the potential to bring the boy actor to the fore of audience attention, and that the effect is relevant to the representation of pregnancy.

⁵² 'Cross-Dressing, The Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England', Lesley Ferris (ed.), *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 20-47, at 37. The article was first published in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988).

⁵³ 'Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance stage', Elaine Showalter (ed.), *Speaking of Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 113-133. The article appeared first in *PMLA* 102 (January 1987).

relationships between theatrical representation and 'actual life' (118) and the different responses of different playwrights. Lyly in *Gallathea*, for example, rejects sexual difference: through the intervention of the gods, one of two girls (played by boys, disguised as boys) will be changed into a boy (115, 127); and Jonson in *Epicoene* denies the gap between sex and gender (127). Susan Zimmerman argues that, in Jacobean drama there is a 'singular pervasiveness of sexual themes and that viewer sensitivity to multi-layered eroticism was never wholly suspended'.⁵⁴ The methods involved were references to draw attention to 'the body beneath that of the actor's impersonation', 'excessive attention to the age, beauty and apparel' of the female character, especially when disguised as a boy; kisses or embraces and attenuated scenes of primary sexual interest' including bedroom scenes; and metatheatrical references to theatrical artifice, especially the transvestite tradition (47). Although the characters she discusses are in plays with transvestite disguise plots, Zimmerman's assessment of the various methods adopted by playwrights to draw attention to the boy actor is useful for my purposes.

Although he does not discuss the playing of pregnancy by a boy, the views of Peter Sallibrass are especially useful for this thesis.⁵⁵ He looks beyond transvestite disguise plots and examines boys playing tragic heroines, in plays where it seems least likely that the playwright would have wished to draw attention to the ambiguity of the figure on stage: *Othello* (64-65), *Cymbeline* (71-72) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (71). He finds that the effect of stressing female body parts in the text and the action highlights the difficulty of fixing what is indeterminate: sex. If the stage demands the audience see body parts, such as breasts or a penis, it makes it clear through actors, who are both boys and women, that sexual fixations are 'not the product of any categorical fixity of gender' and attempts to do so are 'necessarily *prosthetic*' (77). Sallibrass argues that there is a sense of oscillation between, on the one hand, the difference of the boy and the woman and, on the other hand, absorption of the boy into his role (74). I find the concept of oscillation especially useful for discussing the potential effect of a pregnant boy on stage. But the imaginative effort required of the audience is greater when what can be emphasised prosthetically is not a womb but a distended belly which may or may not signify pregnancy.

A wide variety of views has developed about the implications of drawing attention to the sexual indeterminacy of the boy/ woman. Rackin commented that, to the early moderns, the masculine was spirit and the feminine was flesh but this division was inverted on stage because the boy actress's body was male, while the character he portrayed was female. She finds that 'offstage associations' were inverted and 'stage illusion radically subverted the gender divisions of the Elizabethan world' (127). Her distinction of mind and spirit is useful in examining pregnancy, given the complexities of early modern conception as explained in medical texts, as discussed below.

Many scholars have been influenced by the early modern concept of a homological 'one-sex' model in which women have men's genitals, but inverted. Thomas Laqueur wrote that for 'thousands of years it had been a commonplace that women

⁵⁴ 'Disruptive desire: Artifice and indeterminacy in Jacobean comedy', Susan Zimmerman (ed.), *Erotic politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 39-63.

⁵⁵ 'Transvestism and the "body beneath": Speculating on the boy actor', *Erotic Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 64-83.

had the same genitals as men except that...: "theirs [i. e. women's] are inside the body and not outside it".⁵⁶ Laqueur is cited by many of the scholars who discuss boy players and who use this homologous thesis as the basis for interpreting notions of sexual difference in the drama and in the writings of the antitheatricalists.⁵⁷ Laqueur contrasted this homologous, 'one-sex model', in which women are similar to men, but lack the perfection of descended genitals, with a post-Enlightenment version of sexual difference in which 'an anatomy and physiology of incommensurability replaced a metaphysics of hierarchy in the representation of woman in relation to man' (6). Laqueur argued that the one-sex model 'was so deeply ingrained in early modern consciousness that we have to imagine the reverse of twentieth century conceptions of 'sex' and 'gender': 'Gender—man and woman—mattered a great deal and was part of the order of things; sex was conventional....At the very least, what we call sex and gender were in the "one-sex model" explicitly bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substrate...was impossible' (8).

A belief in the similarity of men's and women's genitals led to an understanding, at least theoretically, that women experienced sexual drives and pleasures in the same way as men. Thus conception was evidence that a woman had not only engaged in sexual activity but had enjoyed it. Laqueur contrasted this assumption to the 'commonplace of much contemporary psychology - that men want sex and women want relationships'. Back to antiquity, Laqueur said, men had been equated with friendship and women with the flesh; whereas after the Enlightenment it became accepted that orgasm was irrelevant to conception (Laqueur, 3-4). Gail Kern Paster argued, however, that contrary to Laqueur's claims about female orgasm, which might historicise 'an ideology of sexual pleasure for women', another narrative appears in the obstetrical and gynaecological material of the period, 'founded upon sexual difference, giving institutional expression through humoral theory to a deep ambivalence toward the maternal body'.⁵⁸

Greenblatt specifically disclaimed any suggestion that Shakespeare took an interest in medical discourses 'or that he favoured one theory of generation over another.' But Greenblatt identifies a relationship 'between medical and theatrical practice...[which was] not one of cause and effect or source and literary realisation', but was based on 'a shared code, a set of interlocking tropes and similitudes that function not only as the objects but as the conditions of representation'; sexuality, while not directly appropriated by the theatre, is 'a network of historically contingent figures that constitute the culture's categorical understanding of erotic experience....modes of translation between distinct social discourses, channels through which the shared commotion of sexual excitement circulates' (86-87). But, Greenblatt argued, this 'shared code' based in homology, co-existed with a contradictory sense of determinacy. Behind the fascination with all that 'seems to unsettle sexual

⁵⁶ *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990; published as a First Harvard University press paperback, 1992), 4.

⁵⁷ For example, Laqueur is cited by Orgel 156, fn. 8; Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and effeminization, 1579-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 168, fn. 3; Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 180, n 20 (referring to Laqueur's 1986 *Representations* article 'Orgasm, Generation, and the Politics of Reproductive Biology 1-41); Shapiro 40; Howard 44, fn 7.

⁵⁸ *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993), 167.

difference' there remains a sense of 'a proper generative order that depends upon a distinction between the sexes'; so that even when physicians ceased to believe that women were a defective form of men, rather than abandon homology, they clung to it, for 'without it the traditional psychology and physiology of sex would be thrown into confusion' (82-83).⁵⁹

It is thus the tension between what appear to be contradictory accounts of sexual difference which is significant for Greenblatt. He commented:

...though gender for the Renaissance has everything to do with determinate boundaries (for the period...was intolerant of ambiguity), it has equally to do with the friction between boundaries. (85)

Although he did not discuss pregnancy played by a boy, Greenblatt's arguments about determinacy and indeterminacy are directly relevant to a study of a boy 'with child'.

The most spectacular implication of homology is that sexual difference, for the early moderns, was so indeterminate that any person might change sex, either through a woman's genitals descending or, more frightening, by a man's genitals retracting. Laura Levine argued that the fears of the antitheatricalists were, in some cases, so extreme that they feared the boys, through their performance of women, might revert to women and, further, that men in the audience might do the same because they watched them (10-25). Levine's argument assumed that for the early moderns, sex was able to be altered by gendered behaviour; although she notes, as Laqueur had noted, that the few documented cases where sex transformation was claimed to have taken place were 'only up the great chain of being', that is women transformed into men.⁶⁰

Orgel pointed out that the early modern stage was not exclusively male for, as well as occasional visits from actresses, court theatre involved women on stage; further, women formed an important part of the audience and to concentrate solely on the homoerotic appeal of boy players is to ignore the potential allure of the boys for women and the erotic pleasure of cross-dressed male characters, such as Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*.⁶¹ I have found very useful his discussion of the relative powerlessness of boys under patriarchy, the ways in which boys, while different from women, were also similar because both lacked. Also useful are his comments about the replication of patriarchy, in that 'the sole option imagined by the young in their quest for freedom is marriage' (*Impersonations*, 14).

Greenblatt had concluded that cross-dressed heroines:

pass through a stage of being men in order to become women. Shakespearean women are in this sense the representation of Shakespearean men, the projected mirror images of masculine self-differentiation. (92)

⁵⁹ While *Shakespearean Negotiations* was not published until 1988, part of Chapter 3: 'Friction and Fiction' was published in 1986 in the collected papers from a conference at Stanford, David Welberry and Thomas Heller (eds and intro.), *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1986), 30-52.

⁶⁰ *Men in Women's Clothing*, 109-110, fn. 3, at 168-169.

⁶¹ 'Nobody's Perfect' was included in the *South Atlantic Quarterly's* 1988 'Displacing Homophobia' edition; Orgel: *Impersonations*, 78. Shapiro also finds that Jardine's explanation limits the range of responses for men and ignores the interests of female spectators (3).

Orgel critiqued Greenblatt by arguing that the tension is left unresolved. At the narrative level at the end of plays such as *Twelfth Night*; when Viola's clothes are unavailable and she must remain as Cesario and in *As You Like It*, when Rosalind makes her speech 'If I were a woman...', Shakespeare leaves his heroines in an ambiguous position (50). Further, 'the love of men for men in this culture appears less threatening than the love of men for women: it had fewer consequences, it was easier to de-sexualize, it figured and reinforced the patronage system' (49).

In *Shakespeare Without Women*, Callaghan is concerned that a recognition of the complexity involved in early modern homoeroticism has tended to displace 'the initial feminist recognition (by Jardine) that transvestism is an aspect of misogyny based on the material practice of excluding women from the Renaissance stage' (31). While Callaghan accepts Orgel's 'crucial recognition' that theatre, with its transvestite heroines, was not necessarily misogynistic, because the audiences also included women, she does not find theatre is automatically exculpated. She also disagrees with critics like Belsey who find any destabilisation of meaning to be 'political', without demonstrating how this offers liberating possibilities for feminism (31). As noted above, she is concerned that, on the early modern stage, femininity was constructed by reference to the presence or lack of male genitalia (51). In my view, although medical texts from the early modern period use men's bodies as the basis for their descriptions of the bodies of women, when pregnancy is represented by a boy actor, the lack of women's genitals is also of major significance.

Critics are also divided about the image of pregnancy that appears in early modern drama. Some feminist critics find that there is little enthusiasm for the condition or for the pregnant woman. Janet Adelman is concerned with maternal origins in the female body as they appear in Shakespeare's plays.⁶² In her chapter on *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, Adelman reads Juliet's body in *Measure for Measure* with its 'character too gross', as 'a visible reminder of maternal origins and of the danger that is their inheritance', but finds that body effaced during the play, 'a sign of the play's uneasy relation to sexuality and to the pregnant female body as the site of origin' (88-89). In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena's part virginal, part sexually-achieved, pregnancy embodies the 'intense ambivalence towards female sexuality that informs the play' (85). Adelman reads the romances as a series of plays which attempt to 'reinstate the ideal parental couple' which was lost when *Hamlet* begins. *The Winter's Tale* is a play of recovery of the maternal body, in which the father must first lose authority and the mother be 'subjected to a chastening purgation' (193).

Paster links early modern gynaecological and obstetrical discourses with psychoanalytic analysis but does not place any emphasis on performance. Like Adelman, she finds that pregnancy is not represented as benign in early modern discourses or in the drama. She explores childbirth and nursing as 'forms of bodily evacuation' (163), bodily functions of which the early moderns were ashamed, citing St Augustine's comment that childbirth takes place 'Inter urinas et faecas'. She

⁶² *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992). Adelman wrote the essays making up the book over about 20 years, leading up to its publication in 1992 (ix); parts of the essay on *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* (76-102), were published in 1990 (xii); the chapter on the romances had not appeared before publication in 1992.

comments: 'Although woman is not responsible for the location of the birthing site, she may still find shame in it' (211). Paster provides a detailed discussion of humoral theory and an extensive analysis of early modern medical texts and argues that early modern culture 'constructed pregnancy as disease, birth as evacuation and lactation as a possibly demeaning form of labor' (215).

Other scholars have been able to discern a more enthusiastic approach to procreation and to pregnant women. To Alicia Anna Boutilier, writing in 1994, the early modern play texts both uphold and undermine contemporary views of pregnancy'.⁶³ Boutilier concludes that the plays are more sympathetic and enlightened than the medical authorities and, in particular, the Puritan writers but this enlightenment is derived from 'the playing out of the major paradoxes' within the existing culture (105). She sees the dramatists as emphasising women's 'autonomous sexual desire' and undercutting the need for men to restrict women's sexuality. Also, the focus on sympathy for pregnant women and their nurturing qualities, deconstructs 'gender hierarchies and insistence on male authority' (105). The fact that this is done before an audience confronts the culture with a challenge to 'resolve or change its perceptions about pregnancy' (105-106).

René Breier, in 1996, also finds that Shakespeare treats pregnancy as a more benign condition than it appears in early modern culture and she argues specifically against the thesis that the early moderns saw childbirth as a disease.⁶⁴ She finds that, although early modern medical texts categorised pregnancy as a diseased condition, pregnancy in the plays of Shakespeare is not always presented as diseased or dangerous and that anxiety about pregnancy in the plays only appears when it is associated with illicit sexuality; otherwise it is presented as benign.

My focus in all the plays I discuss is on the relationship between early modern theatre and pregnancy, as performed by boy actors, rather than on more general questions about the effect of boys playing women. As I have explained, my project was generated by the realisation that pregnancy played by a boy has not been discussed. This arose partly through a growing recognition that most of the arguments about transvestite disguise plays depend on the fact that the characters experience desire but do not engage in sexual activity. Where sexual activity can be presumed to have taken place, for example in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the audience, as Stallybrass argues, may well have paid attention to the boy actor with a corresponding stress on the indeterminacy of sex which might also involve suggestions of effeminacy.

⁶³ "The Surer Side": *Pregnancy in English Renaissance Drama and Society*. Thesis submitted for the award of the degree of Master of Arts. Dalhousie University, Halifax Nova Scotia, 1992 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1994). Boutilier argues, for example, that in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, Middleton's use of illegitimately pregnant characters, who avoid public discovery and condemnation, to demonstrate 'the ineffectiveness of sexual restrictions...' (27-47, at 27). In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Webster challenges traditional stereotypes of the widow and the link between a woman's maternal and sexual identities and patrilineage (48-73). Shakespeare's pregnant characters are examined in relation to the state and its rulers in plays as diverse as *Titus Andronicus*, *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale* (74-99). The effect, is to criticise the 'ideological separation of the maternal, and all it represents, from male rule' (vi).

⁶⁴ 'Great-Bellied Women': *The Pregnant Body and the Plays of Shakespeare*. Thesis submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of California, Riverside, 1996 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International Dissertations, 1997).

When the plot requires the audience to accept that a child has been conceived, there is a potential difference. What is questioned is not the future erotic possibilities, disappointments or embarrassments of the characters but the act that has led to conception, an act that is unimaginable for a boy. The pregnant boy does not simply hint at illicit forms of sexual congress according to early modern standards. The only form of sexual activity that can lead to conception is impossible for a boy, conception and birth requiring a bodily threshold peculiar to women. The aspect of homoeroticism, so important for much of the discussion of boy actors, is thus less significant to a boy playing pregnancy. It is especially relevant in *More Dissemblers* and is discussed in Chapter Seven. I note the difficulties of writing in the twenty-first century about same-sex sexual activities in the early seventeenth century without falling into the trap suggested by Johnathan Goldberg, of assuming that homoeroticism is dark and dangerously suspect.⁶⁵

In my view, however potentially benign pregnancy may be, in theory, acting it on stage using a boy actor has implications that are far from benign. I will argue, in individual chapters, that there are similarities between the representation of pregnancy in the medical texts and the version of theatre that emerges in the works of the antitheatricalists. Pregnancy and theatre are both ambiguous and confusing: pregnancy because it is always difficult to ensure a correct diagnosis and identify the dates of conception and delivery; theatre because the meaning is capable of confusing interpretations. Both can lead to excess and lack of control: pregnancy through the woman's swollen belly and the uncontrollable urges of pregnant women; theatre through a capacity for riotous behaviour and uncontrolled lust among its patrons. Both are potentially, if not intrinsically, transgressive: pregnancy because the uncertainties surrounding diagnosis and the safe delivery of a child can so easily be transferred to questions of paternity, accompanied by fears about succession and inheritance; theatre because both the content of plays and the manner in which they are acted run contrary to the word of God.

'The acting of pregnancy' and early modern pregnancy as a performance

Because my interest is the performance of pregnancy by a boy, I discuss plays with roles for women, where the acting of pregnancy is made the subject of comment in a theatrical context. They are all plays in which, I argue, the audience is encouraged to speculate about the woman's body as a pregnant woman's body and about her behaviour as representative of the way pregnant women typically behave. They are also plays in which a performance of some kind takes place, within the drama, in which the woman's pregnancy is of major significance, or which involves a comment on the theatricality of pregnancy.

In *More Dissemblers*, the fact that Antonio is pregnant makes a satisfactory performance of the galliard impossible and the dancing pregnant page links pregnancy directly to an activity closely identified with theatre. The performances to which I refer are theatrical in the widest sense in that the pregnant woman is not simply present but participates, willingly or unwillingly, in a spectacle or ritual. Pregnancy intersects with a variety of other institutions which rely on theatricalised

⁶⁵ *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1992), 105-126, esp. 106-115.

rituals: the law, religion and courtly behaviour. Further, within early modern society, pregnancy was performed as part of a wider ritual performance of human procreation and a pregnant woman's body was interpreted accordingly. A proper pregnancy followed a proper courtship and a properly sanctified marriage. The theatricality of the process is evident in a growing insistence by the church that the marriage must be performed openly, be advertised in advance, be held in a building to which the public had access and be conducted according to words and gestures that had already been decided. I do not suggest that stage pregnancies represent what could be observed in society at the time on the basis that the theatre held a mirror up to life, as some scholars, for example Pauline Kiernan, have argued, in suggesting that a focus on the metatheatrical is indicative of the view that 'Shakespearean drama is an essentially mimetic art.'⁶⁶ This thesis proposes, on the contrary, that what is represented on the stage is always different to and more complex than simple mimesis, partly because the theatricality of 'daily life' can never simply be mirrored. This is most evident when self-reference operates as a reminder that there are no distinct boundaries between life and 'art'.

Because of my interest in pregnancy as a performance, I do not deal with images of pregnancy or descriptions of pregnant women divorced from the acting of pregnancy, even where there might also be allusions to theatre, even to boy actors. Titania's description of her 'vot'ress', in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, conveys a benign image of the pregnant woman's body: '...we have laughed to see the sails conceive/ And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind...' (2.1.128-133).⁶⁷ But the pregnancy is not acted. Nor have I dealt with plays where the only indication of pregnancy is the birth of a child. If its mother is known, a child is the clearest proof possible of a previous pregnancy. Where pregnancy has been in issue in a play, I examine the effect of children on stage. But where the birth of the child is a surprise, as in *Titus Andronicus*, for example, there is little that can be said about the acting of pregnancy. Until Aaron appears on stage with his and Tamora's son, the text provides nothing to imply that Tamora is to bear his child. It is thus unclear that she is pregnant in earlier scenes. Of course, in performance, her pregnancy during the earlier action could have been suggested by the appearance and movements of the boy playing her, especially if he wore some form of padding to emphasise a pregnant belly. But without some textual references with which to compare the boy's possible appearance, a discussion of Tamora's 'pregnancy', as acted, is impossible.

On stage, as Doll Tearsheet's false pregnancy in *The Second Part of Henry the Fourth* makes clear, if it was necessary to indicate pregnancy, a cushion was always to hand. Doll and Mistress Quickly claim that imprisonment will cause Doll to miscarry to which the Beadle responds:

If it do, you shall have a dozen of cushions again; you have but eleven now. (5.4.14-15)⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Shakespeare's Theory of Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2. Kiernan discusses the view that Shakespeare used 'the play' as 'a metaphor for life', turning 'the world itself into a theatre, blurring the distinction between art and life'; and that Shakespeare's plays are 'metaphors for "life-as-drama"', focusing on dramatic reflexivity, the play-within-the-play, and characters seen as actors, stage-managers and playwright-directors', 1-2.

⁶⁷ *Norton Shakespeare*, 805-863.

⁶⁸ *Norton Shakespeare*, 1293-1379.

Bolstering as a method of indicating pregnancy also appears in a record of a play in 1621, at Claverley, in which a woman called Elizabeth Pratt was libelled. It was alleged in court proceedings for defamation that: 'it was devysed that one of the actors should bee apparelled in womens apparell & bolstered and sett forth as though she were great with Child & should aparsonate the said Elizabeth vnder the name of Jenney.....'⁶⁹

Alan C., Dessen and Leslie Thomson suggest that 'a few signals such as "great with child" or "big-bellied" imply that pregnancy meant padding'; but it is not clear if they mean that pregnant women always looked pregnant on the early modern stage or only those characters whose pregnancy, or indeed size, is a matter of comment in the dialogue.⁷⁰ Doll's cushion raises questions about theatrical representation, going beyond pregnancy, in particular whether a boy can put on the sex of a woman at will, by clothes and gestures, as a woman can put on a pillow and become pregnant. Her cushion is revealed as making no difference to 'truth', implying that being a pregnant woman is not something that can be put on like a dress and that the same applies to being a woman. Either way the cushion draws attention to the fact that all stage pregnancies were 'acted'.

Because my emphasis is on the acting of pregnancy by a boy, in early performances of the plays, my analysis of the implications of stage pregnancy is in the context of early modern cultural expectations about pregnancy and childbirth. Early modern childbirth consisted of a series of rituals. Adrian Wilson describes the 'social space of the birth' as 'a collective female space, constituted on the one hand by the presence of gossips and midwife, and on the other hand by the absence of men', enclosed, by blocking out light and air.⁷¹ The full ceremony took from three weeks to a month, and the mother spent time resting after her labour, at first in bed, in a darkened room, later sitting in her room and then moving around the house but not outside it. Although many women friends attended the birth, visitors during the lying-in period were restricted at first to a few women and her closest male relations. Later a wider circle would be admitted and the new mother would hold a feast for her women friends; a man who wished to visit the new mother would do so with his wife. At the end of the month, the woman was 'churched', originally designed as a purification ceremony, later changed to 'the thanksgiving of women after childbirth' (78). In discussing the interpretation of childbirth rituals, Wilson notes with approval the theory of Natalie Zemon Davis, that childbirth might constitute a period in which the subjection of women in marriage might be temporarily reversed, that women might be said to be 'on top'.⁷² But in works which described pregnancy and childbirth, men started to assert a superior role, as discussed in the following section.

⁶⁹ Alan Somerset (ed.), *Records of Early English Drama, Shropshire*, 1.26. I am grateful to Professor Andrew Gurr for providing me with this quotation and reference.

⁷⁰ See entries for 'with child' and 'cushion' in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 252-253 and 63.

⁷¹ 'The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation', Valerie Fildes (ed. and intro.), *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in memory of Dorothy McLaren* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 68-107, at 73.

⁷² 'Women on top', *Society and Culture in Early-modern France* (London, 1975), 124-151, cited in Wilson, 86-87 and 103, fn. 89.

Pregnancy manuals and medical texts

Midwives played a vital role in attending childbirth, accompanied by older women. Robin Briggs argues that the provision of assistance to neighbours was a natural extension of women's duties in their own households.⁷³ As Hilary Marland demonstrates, the history of the decline in the role of the midwife is complex and in the early seventeenth century, the woman midwife's role was not about to be taken over completely by male physicians or surgeons, or by male midwives.⁷⁴ Briggs points out that there was always the possibility that fears and anxieties associated with childbirth could lead to charges of witchcraft, as when a woman had successive miscarriages and placed blame on another person (243), although midwives were not commonly accused of witchcraft in England or Scotland, where they were under-represented in prosecutions and, in fact, played a role in seeking out witches.⁷⁵ Further, there is no evidence that male practitioners sought to exclude women from medical professions because they were women. Practitioners who sought to exclude other practitioners on the grounds that they lacked qualifications were always men but they also attacked other men.⁷⁶

The idea of the midwife as local 'wise woman' is also inconsistent with the facts, at least in London in the early seventeenth century. Doreen Evenden's study of 12 London parishes concludes that many midwives were married to prosperous and influential parishioners while others were affluent widows.⁷⁷ They maintained close connections with their clients, were called in for successive births for the same woman and assisted at births for other family members, sometimes for successive generations. Ironically, the midwives studied by Evenden can claim respectability but the system of licensing suggests that male-dominated institutions controlled the midwives. Although female clients of the midwives also played a part, through the testimonials they provided for licence applications, the licensing process subjected midwives to the church; and their professional reputations depended in part on the status of their husbands, or their prosperity as widows. If the work of historians disrupts the image of the midwife or woman healer as 'old crone' or witchlike figure, operating on the margins, it also reduces the concept of childbirth as a time during which women exercised control. Men might be excluded from the birth chamber but it was men to whom the midwives owed their capacity to practice their profession. Further, the most authoritative texts dealing with pregnancy were written by men and there was a growing interest in the practical management of pregnancy by men.

In diagnosing pregnancy, the woman midwife had an advantage. Paster has described early modern pregnancy as 'radically unknowable even in its visibility'

⁷³ *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Content of European Witchcraft* (London and New York: Viking Penguin, 1966), 71.

⁷⁴ Introduction, Hilary Marland (ed. and intro.), *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 1-2.

⁷⁵ Briggs, 77, 278-279. Midwives accompanied panels of respectable matrons to search women accused of witchcraft for the teats by which they suckled the devil. For example, some London midwives went with William Harvey to examine Lancashire witches and said they had no abnormalities (Briggs, 281). See also David Harley, 'Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife-witch', *Social History of Medicine* 3:11 (April 1990), 1-26.

⁷⁶ See Briggs, 277-278.

⁷⁷ 'Mothers and their midwives in seventeenth-century London', Marland (ed. and intro.), *The Art of Midwifery*, 9-26, at 9.

(182). The woman midwife could conduct an internal examination, so that while she could not see into the womb, she did not rely on external visual signs alone. Jacques Guillemeau, whose work on obstetrics and gynaecology, *Child-birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women*, was translated into English in 1612, stresses the difficulties of diagnosis, because the external signs are ambiguous and misleading.⁷⁸ But although men were not about to replace women as midwives, Guillemeau, in his Introduction to *Child-birth*, establishes a hierarchy of birth management. Guillemeau explains that a child cannot be born safely without the help of its mother; that a mother needs assistance from the midwife 'and other women about her ready to receive and cherish him'; and that, in cases of breech presentation or where the infant is weak, 'or else if the midwife be at the farthest of her skill', a surgeon must be called in; but that this is often too late to save the child, because the family prevents it or the midwife is obstinate (Sig. 2^v).

Nicholas Culpeper, in *A Directory for Midwives*, written in the second half of the century asserts a form of medical superiority over women midwives when he distinguishes 'the *Theory*' and 'the *Practicall part*'.⁷⁹ He goes on to advise the midwives that his rules are 'very plain and easie enough; neither are they so many that they will burden your Brain, nor so few that they will be insufficient for your necessity' (4-5). The important point, he argues, is that 'if you make use of them, you...need not call for the help of a Man-Midwife, which is a disparagement, not only to your selves, but also to your Profession' (5). Culpeper's justification for writing his directory is the need to redress the ignorance of men and women in England about medicine; but although he lays down a great many rules throughout the work, he admits he has no practical experience of childbirth. In material included in *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged*, published in 1659, Madame Louys Bourgeois, the French Queen's midwife, warns against relying on surgeons, 'Mountebanks and Empiricks; than whom there are no men more prodigal of the life of another for money' (16).⁸⁰ Jane Sharp, in *The Midwives Book*, published in 1671,

⁷⁸ *Child-birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women: Wherein is set downe the Gourernment of Women In the time of their Breeding Childe: Of their Trauaile, both naturall, and contrary to Nature: And Of their lying in* (London, 1612; fac. rpt., Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and New York: Da Capo Press, 1972; Early English Books series, No. 464), 1. Guillemeau was surgeon to the King of France and his book was originally published in French in 1609. In discussing difficult deliveries, Guillemeau makes it clear that when he was called to a woman giving birth, he would first examine the mother, then attempt to locate the position and condition of the foetus from outside her body, and then conduct a full internal examination by sliding his hand into the Womens Matrice, 'and feeling the foetus for signs of life, 124.

⁷⁹ *A Directory for Midwives: or, A Guide for Women, In their Conception, Bearing And Suckling their Children* (London: 1651), 4. Book I is 'Of the Vessels Dedicated to Generation'; Book II deals with 'the Formation of the Child in the Womb'; Book III is 'Of what hinders conception'; Book IV: 'Of what furthers Conception'; Books V, VII and VIII are guides, 'for Women in Conception': '...in Labour,; and 'in their Lying In'; Book VI: 'Of Miscarriages in Women'; Book IX is 'Of Nursing Children'.

⁸⁰ *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged. In the most weighty and high Concernements of the Birth of Man. Containing Perfect Rules for Midwives and Nurses, as also for Women in their Conception, Bearing, and Nursing of Children: from the experience, not only of our English but also the Most Accomplished and absolute Practices among the French, Spanish, Italian and other nations* (London, 1659, second edition). The second edition is published with the approval of unidentified 'Professors of Midwifry' in London and other places and corrected by 'R. C., &c, 'Practitioners of the said art'. Bourgeois makes the comment about surgeons, after recounting the story of a woman attended by two midwives during her protracted first labour, whose husband became nervous and

stresses her experience as a practising midwife but Audrey Eccles suggests that if Sharp did practise for thirty years, this indicates 'how ignorant midwives still were'.⁸¹

In addition to works specifically directed to midwives, more scholarly material dealing with the processes of human reproduction was also available, for example *Mikrokosmographia* by Helkiah Crooke, surgeon to James I.⁸² Crooke describes men's and women's genitals and discusses conception, as part of a larger anatomical work. He does not provide practical advice about managing pregnancy. While pregnancy manuals were often prepared for other health professionals, they were expressed in language that could be understood by prospective parents. Other works, such as *Aristotle's Master-Piece*, specifically presented as 'Very Necessary for... Young-Married Women', were also available.⁸³ The earliest surviving copies are from the late seventeenth century although it is agreed that they stem from earlier works.⁸⁴ Eccles argues that they were clearly 'read to pieces and thrown away...'.⁸⁵

At the same time as new work became available, older works were published in English for the first time, or republished. Eccles describes the publication history of *The Byrth of mankinde*, originally by Eucharius Rösslin and written in 1513 for midwives in a German town. It was translated into Latin, and then into English by Richard Jonas, and then reissued by Thomas Raynald in 1545. The Raynald version

called in a surgeon. 'The Midwives who had given way to the Chirurgeon, thinking to take their place again as soon as he had touched her to make his report' were displaced, the surgeon operated and the child was healthy. This led to her second delivery being entrusted to the surgeon. It was a difficult delivery, unexpected by the surgeon who had come without appropriate instruments. He improvised with kitchen utensils and the child was killed. The surgeon ran away (14-15).

⁸¹ Sharp, *The Midwives Book. Or the whole art of Midwifery Discovered. Directing Childbearing Women how to behave themselves In their Conception, Breeding, Bearing and Nursing of Children* (London, 1671; fac. rpt. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1985). Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1982), 14.

⁸² *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* (London: 1615, fac. rpt. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1976; Early English Books 1475-1640, 1409:1). Crooke addresses his work to 'the Worshipfull Company of the Barber-Chirurgeons, the Master, Wardens, Assistants and Communitie of the Same'. Books IV is: 'Of the Naturall parts belonging to Generation'; Book V: 'Of the History of the Infant'.

⁸³ *Aristotle's Master-Piece* (London; 1694); *Aristotle's Compleat Master Piece* (London, 1749); *Aristotle's Book of Problems* (London, 1776), and *Aristotle's Last Legacy* (London, 1776), rpt. London and New York: Garland Publishing, 1986, Marriage, Sex and the Family in England 1660-1800, Vol. 11).

⁸⁴ Eccles describes these as 'popularly written works, aimed at a less-specialised public, which maintained their popularity at this level long past the period with which we are concerned' [before 1740]. She notes that it is not clear when they were first printed but the contents is clearly derived from older books; the works were constantly reprinted but are rare today (12). Greenblatt says that *Aristotle's Master-Piece* probably circulated in English 'considerably earlier' than 1684, the date of the first available edition (181 fn. 28).

⁸⁵ It is not clear that the details of earlier versions of the most popular works are the same as in the extant copies from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For example, the 1694 version of *Aristotle's Master-Piece: or, the Secrets of Generation*, disputes the existence of female seed, 'as followers of Galen and Hippocrates did erroneously imagine', in favour of a theory of ovulation (111), a proposition which is most unlikely to have appeared in works published in the early part of the century. Eccles states that ovulation was first proposed by Harvey in 1651, and translated into English in 1653, and it is therefore unlikely that a reference to ovulation would have appeared in works before this date. Even after the appearance of *De Partu* in English, the existence of female seed is proposed in texts such as *The Compleat Midwives Practice Enlarged* (1659), 95 and Sharp (1671), 54-60.

ran to thirteen editions, the last one in 1654.⁸⁶ The work of Guillemeau's master, Ambroise Paré, written in the middle of the sixteenth century, was not published in English until 1634.⁸⁷ At about the same time, an English translation appeared of another old work, *The Expert Midwife* by Jacob Rueff, originally written in Latin and first published in 1554.⁸⁸

The interest in older works is consistent with the respect accorded to the classical humoral tradition in medicine.⁸⁹ Some of the authors in the later part of the seventeenth century stress the necessity for up-to-date works to ensure that the public is protected, but they often include material which is based on earlier texts, rather than their own observation or a knowledge of recent developments. The Preface to *The Compleat Midwife's Practice* from 'sundry practitioners in and about the city of London' attacks Culpeper for plagiarism and discounts the works which they say he plagiarises as inadequate: 'its almost A miracle to us', that Culpeper should 'descend so low, as to borrow his imperfect treatise from those wretched volumes' (Sig. A2^v).⁹⁰ But it makes a feature of including work by Bourgeois and ignores concepts like ovulation, said by Eccles to be first proposed by William Harvey in *De Partu*, a work first published in 1651, and translated into English in 1653.⁹¹ As a result, what was available to midwives, or to the public generally, was a combination of old and new ideas or, in some cases, old ideas presented as new ones.

Thus, while women managed day-to-day pregnancies and some women wrote about the subject, works by men were more influential, both because of the recycling of older authorities and men's claims that they understood better than women a process which many midwives experienced personally and to which they had greater practical access.

The 'generation metaphor'

In early modern culture, human reproduction, including pregnancy, meant more than conceiving, bearing and giving birth to a child. It was interpreted according to wide-ranging religious, legal and cultural norms dealing with courtship, marriage, marital fidelity, and the obligations and privileges of women before and after they gave birth. The birth of a child could have complex ramifications for inheritance and property rights.

⁸⁶ Eccles discusses the publication history of works before 1700 at 11-16.

⁸⁷ Thomas Johnson (trans), *Collected Works of Ambroise Paré: The Twenty-Fourth Book: Of the Generation of Man* (London, 1634; fac. rpt. Pound Ridge, N. Y.: Milford House, 1968), 855-960.

⁸⁸ See Eccles, 12-13.

⁸⁹ For a discussion of humoral theory, see Paster, 49-74. Eccles comments that there was a variety of new schools of thought and varying opinions among scholars about humoral theory but that differences were treated as non-existent in the versions presented to lay readers, 17-25, 131 fn. 1.

⁹⁰ The Preface states dramatically:

....we have perused all [the many treatises already published] that have been in this nature in English,...[we] find them so strangely deficient, so crowded with unnecessary notions, and dangerous mistakes, that we thought it fit to give you warning of them that for the future, the unfortunate Practicers may prevent the *almost guilt*, of the crying sin of Murder. (Sig. A2^v)

The authors refer here to *The Birth of Man* [probably Raynald], *Childbirth* [probably Guillemeau]), and *The Expert Midwife* [probably Rueff], which they describe as 'the worst that have been written in that kind in French' (Sig. A2^v).

⁹¹ Eccles, 37, 132, fn 23.

Not only was pregnancy performed in society as well as in the theatre, the two were linked by what Elizabeth Sacks called the 'generation metaphor'.⁹² Pregnancy was used as a theme or a mode of expression, based on similarities between the language used to describe creations of the mind and physical procreation (1-16).

Man can generate literally below the waist or figuratively in his head.
The metaphor of generation is so instinctive to us that the etymology
of 'concept' goes largely unremarked. (1)

Since the mid sixteenth century, the word 'pregnant' had disclosed similar links between the brain and the organs of generation. Characters in the plays use 'with child' or 'quick', to describe pregnancy or pregnant women but 'pregnant' also meant: 'full of meaning; suggesting more than is expressed', 'fertile or fruitful in results; big with consequences'; applied to a mind it suggested 'fertility, productiveness, inventiveness' and a pregnant mind was one 'teeming with ideas, imaginative, resourceful, ready'.⁹³ It was also a common early modern practice to appropriate pregnancy and childbirth to describe literary and dramatic creativity. The writer of a poem or play speaks of its 'conception', its 'long gestation period', the 'hard labour of its birth', 'the child of my labours' and the like.⁹⁴ In *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, a play in which pregnancy is 'acted', Thaisa is thought to be dead, and is thrown overboard from a ship in a casket laden with jewels. Both the ship and her casket replicate her womb as a container, prefiguring her rebirth in her death. Jewels are also images associated with birth.⁹⁵ In *Loves Labours Lost*, another play by Shakespeare with a pregnant woman character, the generation metaphor raises

⁹² *Shakespeare's Images Of Pregnancy* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1980), 1-16, at 1.

⁹³ 'Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. II, at 1654. 'Pregnant': Sense I.1 'With child or with young....1545'; Sense II.1.a: 'of a person or his mind; Teeming with ideas, imaginative, resourceful, ready; late ME'; Sense II.2 'Of words, symbolic acts...Full of meaning; suggesting more than is expressed;...full of, replete with (something significant) 1450'. 'Pregnancy' Sense 1. 'The condition of being pregnant or with child or young; gestation'; Sense 2: 'of the soil...fertility, fruitfulness, abundance 1615'; Sense 3. 'in ref. to the mind: Fertility, productiveness, inventiveness, imaginative power; quickness of wit 1550'. For example in Act 5, scene 2 of *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina's steward, when asked if the king has found his heir, says: 'Most true, if ever truth were pregnant by circumstance. That which you hear you'll swear you see, there is such unity in the proofs' (5.2.27-30), to describe a conclusion arrived at by circumstantial evidence. In the plays discussed in the thesis, the words 'pregnant' and 'pregnancy' are never used to describe a woman 'with child' or her condition but in the sense of potentialities.

⁹⁴ See Sacks, 1. See also Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 8-35, especially at 18-26; and Margaret M. Petrochenkov, *Pregnancy and Birth as a Metaphor for Literary Creativity*. Thesis submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Indiana University, 1993 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International Dissertation Services, 1997).

⁹⁵ *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, first performed around 1607-1608. See *Norton Shakespeare*, 2709-2783. *Pericles* is thought to be written by Shakespeare, probably in collaboration with George Wilkins. Walter Cohen suggests that 'George Wilkins probably wrote most of the first nine scenes and Shakespeare most of the remaining thirteen' (2710). The play is notable for the inclusion of scenes acted in 'dumb-show', with a commentary by 'Gower', the fourteenth century author of the source of the play, brought back to life for the duration of the performance. In Scene 10, Gower recounts the marriage of Pericles and Thaisa and the conception of their daughter, Marina: 'Hymen hath brought the bride to bed,/ Where by the loss of maidenhead/ A babe is moulded' (10.9-11). Pericles appears with Thaisa who is 'with child' and they mime a demand from Tyre to Pericles that that he return and the insistence of Thaisa that she accompany him. Gower describes the storm which overtakes their ship and Thaisa's 'fall in travail with her fear' (10.52)

slightly different questions.⁹⁶ Holofernes claims that his impulses or reflections are '...begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion' (4.2.63-65).

Some authors take the comparison to extraordinary lengths. The translator of Guillemeau's *Child-birth*, refers to 'the virginity of pen & paper, and the white sheetes of their Child-bed'.⁹⁷ (Sig. 2^r-2^v). Sacks describes this comparison of physical and mental creation as 'the pregnant poetic' (12) but also as 'male womb-envy' (4) and Katharine Eisaman Maus names a chapter: 'A Womb of His Own'.⁹⁸ But the metaphor was also used about women, although some surprise seems to have been felt that a woman could participate in both mental and physical procreation. For example, in a poem dedicated to 'the most excellently accomplish'd, Mrs. K. P. upon her Poems', Abraham Cowley writes: 'Thou bring'st not forth with pain,/ It neither travel is nor Labour of thy Brain,/ So easily they from thee come,/ And there is so much room/ I'th'unexhausted and unfathom'd womb'.⁹⁹

The childbirth analogy does not always operate simply to take over the woman's role in procreation. Phillip Sidney in *Astrophel and Stella* is 'great with child to speak and helpless in my throes' (Maus, *Inwardness*, 182) but *Arcadia* is 'this child, which I am loath to father' (Sacks, 6). Sacks makes a distinction between the literal and figurative uses of pregnancy by Shakespeare. Where, in the early plays, generation appears as 'thought-process and imagination', the problem plays see a more literalised exploration of 'fertility imagery and wordplay' where action and image are joined. In the tragedies, generation appears as 'a verbal and thematic underpinning', which defines and measures 'man's physical and mental creativity'. Finally, in the romances, Shakespeare achieves a 'fusion of literary and figurative fertility in actual regeneration' (15).

Susan Stanford Friedman argues that there is an inherent weakness in the childbirth metaphor because 'its contextual resonance is fundamentally at odds with the very comparison it makes'; the analogy draws together mind and body, word and womb while simultaneously invoking 'the sexual division of labour on which Western patriarchy is founded' (75).¹⁰⁰ I agree. Further, the generation metaphor itself generates layers of meaning as ambiguous and transgressive as both pregnancy and theatre, with the potential to confuse as well as illuminate. It is not always clear what the correspondence between mental and physical creation entails. 'Ironically enough', as Sacks comments, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, 'the real baby' is borne by the illiterate Jaquenetta, 'probably incapable of rhetorical conceit', but who is 'quick' with a child which 'brags in her belly already' (5.2.602-603). Jaquenetta's womb

⁹⁶ Norton Shakespeare, 2709-2783

⁹⁷ See 'The Translators Preface' (Sig. ¶¶3^r-3^v).

⁹⁸ *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 182-209.

⁹⁹ Abraham Cowley, dedicatory verse in *Poems By the Incomparable, Mrs. K. P.* (London, 1664), (Sig. A4^r). Cowley writes: 'With no less pleasure thou methinks shouldst see/ Thus thy no less immortal Progeny:/ And in their Birth thou no one touch dost find/ Of th' ancient Curse to Woman-kind' (Sig. A4^r). H. A. in another dedicatory verse in the same volume writes of her 'Feminine Quill'. My thanks to Dr. Rosemary Campbell for pointing out these references.

¹⁰⁰ 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse', Elaine Showalter (ed. and intro), *Speaking of Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), 73-100, at 75.

thus matches the brain of Holofernes, 'full of verbiage' (40). The 'irony' may be that true pregnancy triumphs. But it could also be implied that, if Jaquenatta's babe is a bragging babe, and thus comparable to Holofernes, her pregnant belly is as hollow as his wit.

The scope and effect of the generation metaphor is further complicated by the fact that early modern medical and religious authorities distinguish mind and matter but also suggest a connection between them. Ian Maclean describes differences, argued to be sourced in the teachings of Aristotle and Galen, relating to the respective contributions of men and women to conception.¹⁰¹ For both 'Aristotelians' and 'Galenists', 'a male animal is one that generates in another, whereas the female generates in herself' (30). But there was less agreement about the existence and operation of female seed. One view was that woman is less important to procreation because she carries the foetus and provides the place of conception: 'Just as the seed is more perfect than the earth in which it is planted and from which it draws nourishment, so also is the male more perfect than the female.'¹⁰² Maclean states that after 1600, most doctors agreed that women provide seed but disputed its efficacy. He says that the 'commonly accepted view is that expressed by Galen...which states that woman has semen which is colder and less active than that of the male' but there was still uncertainty about the contribution made by female seed: whether it contributes to the form of the foetus, as Galen argued, as well as providing matter (36-37). Many of these tensions are heightened by the 'one-sex model' of sexual difference, discussed above. Mind and womb were also linked in early modern culture through 'the mother', the hysterical condition that applies to women, including but not limited to pregnant women, and also to men. Women's minds could also be important in forming the appearance of a child. Birth defects, for example, could be explained by the woman's wandering imagination, as described, for example, by Paré (888).¹⁰³

The idea of a woman's body as a container is like the image of the body as 'ground' into which the man plants his seed, thus favouring a conception model in which the woman's role is limited and where she is cast as the property of her husband. A womb as container also leads, inevitably, to comparisons of the womb with the structures in which the drama is acted out: 'the big womby o, in all its forms, may refer to the theatre (the Globe) to "the great globe itself"....' (Sacks, 41). Other, less bounteous, comparisons are possible, as I discuss in the rest of this thesis.

¹⁰¹ *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). Maclean points out that, although authorities might either refer to the teachings of Aristotle or Galen or label the ideas of others as 'Galenist' or 'Aristotelean', their arguments had no necessary relationship with the works of either. He notes the complexities of differences of opinion between 'Aristoteleans' and 'Galenists', including disputes about the true beliefs of Aristotle (30-39). He also notes that some doctors claim to be both Galenists and feminists: that is, believing 'against Aristotle' that men and women are equally perfect in their sex: whereas Galen did not argue for equality between the sexes (29). Paster claims that Maclean's account is reductive, depending too strongly on binary oppositions (83).

¹⁰² Cesare Cremonini (1550-1630), discussed by Maclean, 32.

¹⁰³ For a full discussion of the link between woman's imagination and birth defects see, Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), esp. 1-103.

'Sex' and 'gender'

As noted, Laqueur found that homology was so ingrained in the early modern consciousness that 'gender' became their primary category. As one issue in which I am interested is the interplay in the drama between sex and gender, I should explain how I use the words. Critics do not use the words 'sex' and 'gender' consistently, disagreeing about the role of physiology and culture in establishing some perceived difference. One person's 'sex' can well be another person's 'gender' because the terms are used interchangeably.¹⁰⁴ Ann Oakley gives as an example Ivan Illych, who uses 'gender' to describe differences which he regards as essential (Oakley, 37).

Judith Butler uses 'sex' to describe the processes by which sexual difference is culturally constructed. 'Sex', according to Butler, is not a fact or a condition but a process through which the regulatory norms make 'sex' material.¹⁰⁵ She argues that:

... 'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce - demarcate, circulate, differentiate - the bodies it controls. (1)

Butler does not necessarily deny the possibility of sexual difference arising from biology but argues that there are no ways to identify it outside culturally defined perceptions of it. This is more than a simple question of nomenclature because cultural processes do more than establish how we should understand our sex, the opposite sex, and the difference between them. Culture establishes for each of us which sex we are and, because the processes occur to all of us, sex is thus established by culture which does not simply demonstrate how difference is to be perceived. It creates the difference. Butler describes this creative process as 'performative' because each of us learns sex through cultural rituals which start when we are born. Without the performative process we would not have anything that we would be able to describe as sex. Butler leaves no room for a distinction between 'sex' and 'gender'. Everything is 'sex' and 'sex' is culturally constructed.

I use 'sex' in this thesis to suggest differences which stem from the body and 'gender' to indicate the product of 'regulatory norms', the criteria which go to make up a culture's understanding of sex and sexual difference. My starting point is that sex is essential and that gender is culturally acquired, partly through a performative process, as described by Butler for 'sex'. My use of 'sex' and 'gender' in this manner is not intended to suggest that differences can easily be identified as pertaining to biology or culture or that it is possible to delineate where the boundary between them lies. Both are, to use Laqueur's words: 'explicitly bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substrate...[is] impossible' (8). While early twenty-first century opinion about sexual difference does not remotely extend to the proposal that women's genitals are an inferior version of men's, it does not necessarily appear 'nonsensical', as Laqueur supposed (8), that

¹⁰⁴ Ann Oakley, 'A Brief History of Gender', Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell (eds), *Who's Afraid of Feminism?: Seeing through the Backlash* (London: Penguin, 1998), 29-55. See also Elaine Showalter, 'Introduction: The Rise of Gender', *Speaking of Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989) 1-13; and Mary Poovey, 'Recent Studies of Gender', *Modern Philology* 88:4 (May 1991), 415-420.

¹⁰⁵ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

gender could be more important than sex in forming cultural perceptions of ‘man’ and ‘woman’, ‘male’ and ‘female’ or ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’.¹⁰⁶

Without making a distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, I believe that it would be impracticable to provide a thorough analysis of the pregnant boy, as presented in *More Dissemblers* or of the different pregnant boys in other plays I discuss. Maintaining the possibility of the distinction also allows a discussion of how far early modern discourses saw some aspects of sexual difference as culturally constructed and thus likely to be different between different cultures: that is, to ask whether the early moderns had an understanding of something akin to ‘gender’.

Structure of Thesis

After this Introduction, the thesis contains seven chapters, each dealing with a different play, followed by a short Conclusion. As well as *More Dissemblers*, I deal with six plays: *Measure for Measure*,¹⁰⁷ *All’s Well That Ends Well*,¹⁰⁸ and *The Winter’s Tale*¹⁰⁹ by Shakespeare; Middleton’s *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*;¹¹⁰ *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster;¹¹¹ and Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*.¹¹² The plays were first performed over a period of less than twenty-five years, perhaps less than twenty years.¹¹³ I discuss them in the order in which they were first performed, except for some uncertainty about whether *Measure for Measure* comes before or after *All’s Well That Ends Well*. I have decided to deal with *Measure for Measure*

¹⁰⁶ Apparently, some concept of homology has persisted, despite modern knowledge of human anatomy, especially the existence of the ovaries, and the difference between a female egg and male sperm. An article in *The Canberra Times* (30 July, 1998, 3), ‘Mystery of clitoris solved by Australian’, notes the work of a Melbourne urology surgeon who found that the clitoris ‘extends deep into the body, is twice the size shown by most medical texts and probably 10 times as large as most people think it is’ and that it includes a lot of submerged erectile tissue. Ms O’Connell is reported as saying that when she studied for medical examinations in the late 1980’s, the text books either included inaccurate and out-of-date illustrations, or omitted them completely, and that ‘written accounts described women’s genitals as similar to men’s only inside out or as a poor relation to their male counterpart’.

¹⁰⁷ All quotations from Shakespeare are from the *Norton Shakespeare*. *Measure for Measure* is at 2021-2090.

¹⁰⁸ *Norton Shakespeare*, 2175-2244.

¹⁰⁹ *Norton Shakespeare*, 2873-2953.

¹¹⁰ Quotations from *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* are from Brian Loughrey and Neil Taylor (eds and intro.), *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1988; issued as a Penguin Classics paperback, 1988), 161-238.

¹¹¹ Quotations from *The Duchess of Malfi* are from D. C. Gumby (ed. and intro.), *John Webster: Three Plays* (London and New York: Penguin English Library, 1972; published in Penguin Books, 1986; a Penguin World’s Classics edition), 167-292.

¹¹² Quotations from *Bartholomew Fair* are from Gordon Campbell (ed. and intro.), *Ben Jonson: The Alchemist and Other Plays* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, first published as a World’s Classics paperback, 1995), 327-433.

¹¹³ The first known performance of *Measure for Measure* was on 26 December, 1604, by the King’s Men at Whitehall. See N. W. Bawcutt (ed. and intro.), *Measure for Measure* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991; issued as an Oxford World’s Classics paperback, 1994; reissued 1998), 1. Bawcutt suggests the play may have been performed during the summer season of 1604, 1-2. *More Dissemblers* was played before the Prince at court on 18 January, 1624 (Gurr, 387 and 389). No earlier performances have been identified. For the views of scholars about the date *More Dissemblers* was written, see Chapter Seven.

first.¹¹⁴ There is also some uncertainty about the date of *More Dissemblers*, the play I deal with last. Some scholars dated it c. 1615 but more recently it has been given a date of c. 1619. The first known performance was in 1624. A performance of *More Dissemblers* as early as 1615 would still follow *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Bartholomew Fair*, so I discuss *More Dissemblers* last.

The first three chapters deal with plays by Shakespeare. Chapter One: 'Pregnancy as a Sign of Sin', examines the outward signs of pregnancy on Juliet's body in *Measure for Measure*, as a sign that she has transgressed the moral and social laws concerning marriage and sexuality with which the play is concerned. In Chapter Two:

'Pregnancy as Life or Death?', I discuss Helena's body in *All's Well That Ends Well*, as the answer to Diana's riddle:

Dead though she be she feels her young one kick.
So there's my riddle; one that's dead is quick.
And now behold the meaning. (5.3.299-301)

Chapter Three: 'Pregnancy as a State of Mind', on *The Winter's Tale*, explores the role of the mind in early modern pregnancy. Against the background of Hermione's pregnancy and the way it slips in the mind of Leontes, from the benign sign of married love and fruition to proof of adultery, the chapter explores the effects of 'the mother' in creating Leontes's false conception and the exhortation of Paulina to 'awake your faith' during the rebirth of Hermione in the statue scene.

Later chapters deal with two plays by Middleton, and one each by John Webster and Ben Jonson. Chapter Four: 'Pregnancy as Production', deals with the commodification of love and sex in Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and the way the characters treat human offspring according to their marketability. Chapter Five: 'Pregnancy as a Loss of Control', discusses the links, in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, between pregnancy and unsuccessful attempts to impose control, as demonstrated by the Pica, the uncontrollable urge to eat strange food which affects pregnant women. In Chapter Six, on Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*: 'Pregnancy as Excess', pregnancy is again associated with uncontrollable desires, although what exactly is out of control remains unclear. Chapter Seven: 'Pregnancy as a Dance', returns to *More Dissemblers* and examines the inter-relation of sex differences and gender roles.

¹¹⁴ As noted, *Measure for Measure* was performed on 26 December, 1604. *All's Well That Ends Well* is listed by Gurr as a play of the Chamberlain's Men (303), but there are no records of performances in the early seventeenth century. Maus describes *Measure for Measure* as 'the last in a long series of comedies that explore complex issues of sex, marriage and personal identity', Introduction to *Measure for Measure* in Norton Shakespeare, 2021. This implies that *Measure for Measure* follows *All's Well That Ends Well*; but in the Introductory Note to *All's Well*, Maus simply describes *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* as plays written between 1602 and 1606 (2175). In the Introduction to the Arden *All's Well That Ends Well*, G. K. Hunter argues that *Measure for Measure* follows *All's Well* because it is 'the less uncertain achievement', and, 'in its added emphasis on reconciliation, female purity, and on the achievement of humbled wisdom, *Measure for Measure* is a stage nearer the last plays, towards which, I take it, *All's Well* itself is pointing' (London and New York: Methuen, 1959, reissued as a University paperback, 1967), xxiv. But his tentative conclusion is only that *All's Well* is dated 1603-4 (xxv). Susan Snyder discusses arguments about the dates of writing and performance of *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well*. She argues persuasively that *All's Well* is later. See Susan Snyder (ed. and intro.), *All's Well That Ends Well* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993; issued as an Oxford World's Classics paperback, 1994), 20-24.

I claim that my thesis is original in linking two closely related areas which have not been dealt with together and which are relevant to the representation of women in early modern drama: the playing of women by boys and the representation of pregnancy on stage. Most of the plays I discuss have already received extensive scholarly attention which deals with women's bodies, pregnancy and theatre and my study builds on this work. My focus is on pregnancy through the lens of performance and I examine the extent to which pregnancy is presented within a play as 'acted', so that the pregnant character is not simply present on stage but is part of an on-stage ritual or performance. My primary focus is on scenes in which the pregnant character appears and the way her pregnancy is treated, in the context of early modern medical, legal, religious discourses and social practices. But I also examine other aspects of the play where they are relevant to the element of performance or to the boy actor.

Only at the end of each chapter, do I look at the relevance of the boy actor playing the pregnant woman's role. I identify 'reference points' to use Jardine's term, which would have been likely to draw the attention of the audience to the boy, as a boy. I then explore the implications of the boy actor for the conclusions I have already reached about the performance of pregnancy. In performance, of course, the boy actor and the character he played, could not be so neatly divided and, to use Stallybrass's term, the dramatic experience 'oscillated' with the metatheatrical impact of the boy actor.

Chapter One

Pregnancy as a Sign of Sin: *Measure for Measure*

Juliet, in *Measure for Measure*, who is 'with child', is not on stage often and speaks very little but her pregnancy provides the impetus for the action and many scholars have found in it a metaphor for interpreting the play, as discussed below.¹ Her condition raises complex issues about the policing and punishment, within a society, of what it defines as sexual irregularities, about the practice of marriage formation and about the manner in which marriages should be celebrated. On none of these issues is there scope for a simple reading of the play. Juliet and Claudio speak as if they consider themselves bound in marriage and also as if their union is lecherous and sinful. Their assessment of their own situation, and the reactions of other characters, cover the range of early seventeenth century English responses to pre-nuptial sexual activity among contracted or betrothed couples, from outright condemnation to incredulity that any law could be effective to prevent it. The 'guilty' couple are ambivalent in their approach to what they have done. In her discussion with the Duke (as Friar) in Act 2, scene 3, Juliet accepts his assessment that her behaviour is sinful, as reflected in her foetus: 'I do and bear the shame most patiently' (2.3.21). But she interrupts the Duke as he probes the exact nature of her penitence: 'I do repent me as it is an evil;/ And take the shame with joy' (2.3.37-38).

Claudio may assert that Juliet is 'fast my wife' (1.2.124), but he describes what has occurred as 'lechery' (1.2.116), the result of 'too much liberty' (1.2.105), his behaviour as 'immoderate' (1.2.107), and to be compared to '...rats that raven down their proper bane;/ A thirsty evil; and when we drink, we die' (1.2.109-110). Conversely, in his discussions with Isabella he argues that lechery is the least of the seven deadly sins (3.1.109-110). Despite his apparent disgust for his licentious behaviour, in Act 1, scene 2, Claudio's thoughts are concentrated more on the consequences of his behaviour, on the punishment rather than repentance, and his energies for the rest of the play are devoted to avoiding death. By comparison, Isabella proclaims the actions of the couple as vicious. Her first words to Angelo, when she seeks clemency for Claudio, are:

There is a vice that most I do abhor,
And most desire should meet the blow of justice....(2.2.29-30)

The Provost subscribes to a double standard. He describes Juliet as one: 'Who, falling in the flaws of her own youth;/ Hath blistered her report. She is with child. / And he [Claudio] that got it, sentenced—a young man/ More fit to do another such offence/ Than die for this' (2.3.10-15). Pompey does not discuss Juliet and Claudio, but thinks any attempt to control the sexuality of young people is impossible while they have sexual organs to use: 'Does your worship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city' (2.1.205-206).

¹ *Measure for Measure* was not published until the First Folio, in 1623. Quotations are from the Norton Shakespeare (2021-2090). The first known performance was on 26 December, 1604, by the King's Men at Whitehall. See N. W. Bawcutt (ed. and intro.), *Measure for Measure*, 1. See Andrew Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, for a discussion of whether the play may have been performed at the Globe Theatre during the previous summer season, 298. As discussed below, it is possible that the play was adapted by Middleton, after Shakespeare's death, and may have been performed.

The variety of attitudes within *Measure for Measure* about the moral status of Juliet's pregnancy is echoed in the variety of interpretations found by different scholars. I have not attempted to provide a thorough survey, simply noting some analyses I have found useful in examining the acting of pregnancy in the play. Most scholars identify a linguistic and dramatic link between human reproduction and other forms of generation but do not agree about the implications of the comparison.² It will be clear from my discussion below that I do not accept that Juliet's pregnancy in *Measure for Measure* offers promise of a fruitful and regenerative future. Several critics have commented on what Janet Adelman describes as a 'literalization of the pun that identifies death and orgasm' (87), for example Claudio's: 'I will encounter darkness as a bride,/ And hug it in mine arms' (3.1.81-83).³

Several scholars identify *Measure for Measure* as a play which deals with theatricality. For example, Jonathan Dollimore and Stephen Greenblatt comment on the use of theatricality as a form of ideological subordination by the State whereby responsibility is displaced onto the ruled.⁴ Katharine Eisaman Maus identifies an early modern 'fascination with substitutability', the constant replacement of one

² Elizabeth Sacks, *Shakespeare's Images of Pregnancy*, finds in the play a variety of generational images: 'plenteous womb...full tilth and husbandry' (1.4.42-43); 'coining and stamping' (1.2.132); and 'weight, carriage and motion' (2.3.20-30), (Sacks, 54-55). She finds that the play shows the potential for antithetical readings of Shakespeare, both bawdy and spiritual (60-63), concluding that 'the essence of humanity' for Shakespeare lay in 'the coalescence of spiritual and physical': 'in man's (sic) ability to create a baby and to conceive a brainchild cerebrally'. *Measure for Measure* explores both these realities and makes them identical' (62). While I agree with Sacks that the use of the generation metaphor in *Measure for Measure* establishes pregnancy as ambiguous, I have serious doubts about her wider conclusion. See also, Amanda Piesse, 'Self-preservation in the Shakespearian System: Gender, Power and the New History', Nigel Wood (ed. and intro.), *Measure for Measure* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1996), 44-89. Piesse argues that *Measure for Measure* portrays an initial and wilful misrepresentation of the nature of sexuality and pregnancy', returning to 'a positive state promising fruition'. Pregnancy, in the early part of the play is perverted into 'a legalistic metaphor whose meaning can be inverted and perverted', part of 'the milieu of linguistic gender control' (75).

³ In *Measure for Measure*, Adelman says, 'all sexuality is illicit and enforces its own death sentence, whether through Angelo's restitution of the law condemning fornication or through the disease that seems its inevitable attendant'. See *Suffocating Mothers*, 76-102, at 87. Jonathan Dollimore finds in *Measure for Measure*, a 'philosophy of death...delivered with all the ideological authority of the Church, to encourage voluntary, internalized compliance to complement the overt repression', which while not completely successful, has 'a wider significance in the play, especially the idea that desire is somehow programmed to self-destruct.' See *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (London and New York: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1998), 113-116, at 114-115.

⁴ See Dollimore, 'Transgression and surveillance in *Measure for Measure*', Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (eds and intro.), *Political Shakespeare: Essays in cultural materialism* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985), 72-87. Greenblatt, in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (129-163, esp. 133-142), examines James I as a model for the Duke, through the practice of arousing fear through the theatrical use of public executions and maimings, so that pardons could demonstrate the mercy of the ruler (137). The activities of the Duke are also reminiscent of the use by the Church of anxiety as a religious tool. Greenblatt also find that 'the disguised duke...who fuses the strategies of statecraft and religion, has also seemed to many critics an emblem of the playwright' (138). Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1988), reads *Measure for Measure*, not as a political allegory but as 'a searching exploration of the shape a more intrusive form of power might take, an imaginary projection of a transition from one genre of government to another—from one structured along the lines of pastoral romance to one structured along the lines of pastoral inquiry and its theatricalization', 88-115, at 107.

character by another.⁵ She discusses the implications for theatrical performances if spectators in the theatre should imagine themselves in the place of those they witness on stage, as proposed by Phillip Sidney and Thomas Heywood (174).

Because my focus is on the acting of pregnancy, my discussion deals with scenes where Juliet is on stage but I note the metatheatrical references, for example to the 'houses in the suburbs of Vienna [that] must be plucked down' (1.2.78), establishing a link between theatres and brothels reminiscent of the antitheatricalists. When Isabella first appears before Angelo, she provides a critique of Angelo's acting of authority:

Could great men thunder
As Jove himself does, Jove would never be quiet,
For every pelting petty officer
Would use his heaven for thunder, nothing but thunder.
...But man, proud man,
Dressed in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As makes the angels weep, who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal. (2.2.113-126)

She implies that Angelo is like a ranting actor dressed in a skimpy costume, in a production in which too much reliance is placed on the thunder machine. His performance is fragile; his essence has no substance and can be seen through. To see it would make the angels weep, but humans can only laugh. In Isabella, by comparison, as Claudio has noted: 'There is a prone and speechless dialect/ Such as move men' (1.2.160-161). The critique of theatrical performance in this scene is enhanced because Isabella is accompanied by Lucio, who acts the joint roles of prompter and audience.⁶ He gives advice about how she should deliver her lines, criticises her performance and applauds when he thinks she plays the part well or that her words are effective. For example:

Give't not o'er so. To him again: entreat him.
Kneel down before him; hang upon his gown.
You are too cold. If you should need a pin,
You could not with more tame a tongue desire it.
To him, I say. (2.2.43-47)
You are too cold. (2.2.58)
Ay, touch him; there's the vein. (2.2.72)⁷
O to him, to him, wench! He will relent
He's coming; I perceive't. (2.2.127-128)

I do not propose that this reading of the scene diminishes the sexual innuendo of much of Lucio's language, or the *double entendre* in Isabella's own comments, for example, 'I would to heaven I had your potency' (2.2.69). Her reference to 'glassy essence' for example, can be interpreted as a comment on semen as well as acting.

⁵ *Inwardness*, 157-181, at 171.

⁶ See Mary Ellen Lamb, 'Shakespeare's "Theatrics": Ambivalence toward Theater in *Measure for Measure*', *Shakespeare Studies*, XX (1998), 129-146, at 132.

⁷ This may be an implied stage direction, suggesting that Isabella has touched Angelo on the arm or garment; see 2.2.72, fn.1. Other references are: 'That's well said' (2.2.112); 'Thou'rt i'th' right, girl. More o' that' (2.2.132); 'Art advised o' that? More o'nt' (2.2.135); 'Go to; 'tis well; away' (2.2.160).

Such comments only serve to link theatrical performances, the acting of authority and sexual prowess.

The play reinforces the ambiguity of early modern pregnancy, according to medical, religious and legal discourses and social practices. Juliet's pregnancy is acted as part of a ceremony of punishment and contrition so that the physical signs on her body are not simply evidence of her pregnancy but are used to establish her behaviour, and Claudio's, as sinful and deserving of punishment by the law. In a separate section, at the end of the chapter, I will consider the potential effect on my conclusions about pregnancy, and theatre, of the boy actor playing Juliet and the other boy playing Isabella.

'Mutual entertainment'

As Juliet and Claudio are being led to prison, Claudio explains to his friend, Lucio:

Thus stands it with me. Upon a true contract
I got possession of Julieta's bed
You know the lady, she is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order. This we came not to,
Only for propagation of a dower
Remaining in the coffer of her friends,
From whom we thought it meet to hide our love
Till time had made them for us. But it chances
The stealth of our most mutual entertainment
With character too gross is writ on Juliet. (1.2.122-132)

Juliet does not speak but her presence is established by a stage direction, although there are some confusing aspects of the First Folio text which have led to arguments that Juliet was not on stage at this point in the original performance or in the final scene.⁸ If this supposition is correct, Claudio's words to Lucio demonstrate that it is Juliet's appearance that has revealed her condition. I suggest, however, that the effect for the audience would have been less powerful than a visual display of pregnancy. My analysis proceeds on the basis that Juliet was present in both Act 1, scene 2 and the final scene in some performances in the early seventeenth century, if not when first performed, then when it was revived after Shakespeare's death.

⁸ The stage direction indicating Juliet's presence immediately after 1.2.93, appears in the First Folio, at I.iii.111 (that is, at the beginning of the scene). See *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories & Tragedies; A Facsimile of the First Folio* (Routledge: New York and London, 1998), 80. It is possible that the text in the First Folio was adapted by Middleton, after Shakespeare's death, that what was printed in the First Folio was an amalgamation of both the original and Middleton's adaptation and that, in Shakespeare's original version, Juliet was not on stage during this scene and that she did not appear either in Act 5, scene 1, where her presence is indicated by a stage direction and she is discussed but does not speak. The *Norton Shakespeare* omits an exchange between Pompey and Mistress Overdone that appears in the First Folio. After she has described Claudio's arrest and his offence, she appears to be told about it again, by Pompey, who speaks of a man being led to prison 'for Groping for Trowts in a peculiar Riuer' and Mistress Overdone reacts as if she knows nothing about it. The passage is at I.ii.79-85 in the First Folio, 80. Maus, as editor in the *Norton Shakespeare*, includes the stage direction indicating Juliet's presence but comments that: 'In his [Shakespeare's] version, Juliet, present but silent in the adapted text..., probably did not appear...' (2087). What is presented is thus not a 'supposedly "Shakespearean" version...but instead reconstructs the version presumably performed by the King's Men a few years before the printing of the Folio' (2028). But it is also argued that the double account of Claudio's arrest need not suggest revision and that Juliet is on stage. See Bawcutt, 73.

Being 'with child' is an unwanted result of the 'mutual entertainment' Juliet has experienced with Claudio. Her body signifies prior sexual activity and, by definition, her sexual pleasure. One of the most important tests of pregnancy in the medical texts and manuals (more important than visible signs such as a swollen belly) is that when conception is thought to have occurred, both parties recall that the occasion was an especially pleasurable one. Jacques Guillemeau reports that some men can tell immediately after intercourse that their wife has conceived, because they experience special pleasure, with the sensation that the womb has sucked or drawn at the end of the penis.⁹ A sign that a woman is pregnant is that she has 'received an extraordinarie delight in the companie of her husband' accompanied by an immediate sensation of 'yawning and stretching', 'a shaking or quiuering...' (4).¹⁰ Other early modern authorities agree that a woman's experience of especial satisfaction, at the time she thinks she conceived a child, is important in determining whether she is pregnant. Helkiah Crooke says, in *Mikrokosmographia*, that a woman's pregnancy is proved, 'if she receiue the seed of man with delight....' (263), although he also considers the views of authorities who had disputed the necessity for female pleasure, noting the numbers of women who 'say they haue no sense or inkling of pleasure at all' (295).¹¹ In general, the pregnancy manuals suggest that if conception has occurred, the woman will have experienced sexual pleasure.

I mentioned in the Introduction that Gail Kern Paster is dubious about the widespread acceptance of the 'one-sex' homologous model of sexual difference as an indication of equality for women in experiencing sexual pleasure.¹² In my view, *Measure for Measure* provides a good example of an ambivalent attitude towards women which is based on their supposed similarity to men in experiencing sexual pleasure, coupled with a distaste for women's bodies as carriers of sin. Juliet's pregnancy signifies that she has engaged in intercourse and, as the man who has fathered the child, Claudio has authority to describe her as pregnant because he can report their mutual enjoyment. His avowal of their pleasure might appear to accord Juliet a right to enjoy her sexuality, especially in the context of a play in which other characters seek desperately to stifle their own. But as Ambroise Paré explains, lust is a part of the plan to preserve the human species because man, as a reasonable being, would not otherwise engage in 'a thing so abject and filthy as is carnall copulation' without 'venerous ticklings' to relax the severity of his mind or the knowledge that 'the memory of his name ought not to end with his life'.¹³ Paré leaves no room to doubt

⁹ *Child-birth*, 3.

¹⁰ In the days that follow, according to Guillemeau, she will also experience pain at the navel, rumbling in the lower abdomen and 'a kind of tickling', as the womb shrinks (4).

¹¹ For Culpeper, in *A Directory for Midwives*: 'The greater the Womans desire of Copulation is, the more subject is she to conceive' (122). The *Compleat Midwives Practice* lists as one of the signs of conception: 'if after she hath had the company of her Husband, she hath received more content than ordinary' (78). There is some confusion about when conception takes place. These sensations (for the man, a sucking and drawing at his penis, for the woman, a yawning and stretching of the womb) are said to relate to the closure of the womb after conception, suggesting that conception takes place immediately after the seed is received by the woman; Sharp, in *The Midwives Book*, for example, lists as her first sign of pregnancy: 'if when the seed is cast into the womb, she feel the womb shut close, and a shivering or trembling...' (102); but Sharp also states that it will take time before the seeds are properly mixed and only then does the matrix contract and she notes that otherwise a woman would conceive every time she had intercourse (70).

¹² Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 166-167.

¹³ Paré, *Of The Generation of Man*, 886.

his disgust for the processes of human reproduction when he comments on 'the place appointed for humane conception, the loathsomenesse of the filth...humected and moistened, and the vicinity and neerenesse of the great gut...and of the bladder' (887).

It is female bodies that are abhorrent to Paré who does not comment on the position of the man's genitals or the dual uses of the penis. He also distinguishes lust in men and women. In men, lust is necessary because otherwise they would avoid sex, as an activity which is disgusting in itself. In women, sexual pleasure is essential because, anticipating the burdens of pregnancy and the pains of childbirth, women would avoid the company of man (887). Nicholas Culpeper warns that '...satiety gluts the womb', a reason why whores seldom conceive and why women usually conceive after they have been apart from their husbands.¹⁴ Men are also warned against excessive sexual activity, not because it might reduce the effectiveness of male seed but because it can lead to bloody seed or ejection of blood, or to painful urination (Paré, 887). Where a man's health is considered important, it seems that for a woman the most significant consideration is how sexual activity relates to her capacity to reproduce.

The same ambivalence about sexual pleasure, even within marriage, can be found in religious works. Patricia Crawford summarises the most significant Protestant teachings about early modern marriage.¹⁵ Marriage was 'an honourable estate, not a poor substitute for celibacy' (39). It was based on mutual love and companionate marriages were the ideal. 'Marriage was instituted by God, and marriage and child-bearing were women's appointed purposes' (39). Women were expected to be chaste, not celibate, so that 'the dedication of a woman's life to the ideal of celibate chastity [was regarded as] a denial of the purpose for which she was made' (46). Religious writings indicate that, within marriage, sexual desires should be indulged in moderation. William Gouge, for example, describes the duty of 'due benevolence', as necessary for preserving 'chastitie in such as haue not the gift of continency, for increasing the world with a legitimate brood, and for linking the affections of the married couple more firmly together'.¹⁶ Gouge argues that, in line with the contractual basis of marriage, 'to denie this dutie being iustly required, is to denie a due debt...' (223). But both parties are released from due benevolence for 'excesse': when either partner is insatiable, seeking to provoke lust rather than assuage it, and thus weakening their 'naturall vigor more then suppressing their vnnaturall humor' (223). In addition to the various times when sexual relations are prohibited, such as days of fasting, or when the wife is menstruating, mercy demands that, if one partner is ill or weak, the other must forbear. If the illness continues over a long period, the only remedy is for the body to 'be beaten downe, and earnest praier made for the gift of continency:...' (223).

There is evidence that early modern women had access to some forms of contraception and abortion, although the number of extra-marital pregnancies

¹⁴ Culpeper, *A Directory for Midwives*, 121.

¹⁵ Patricia Crawford, *Women and religion in England, 1500-1720* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993, Christianity and Society in the Modern World series), 38-52.

¹⁶ *Of Domesticall Duties* (London, 1622; fac. rpt. Norwood, N. J.: Walter J Johnston and Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1976; English Experience series, Vol. 803), 222-223.

suggests that the techniques were not always effective.¹⁷ Juliet's pregnancy appears to deny the possibility of sexual relations without pregnancy. It constitutes a powerful statement that illicit sexuality will emerge on the body through visual signs and that a pregnant woman has no option but to carry the child to term. However, given that whores were understood not to conceive, either through excessive sexual activity or because they had access to contraceptives, the fact that Juliet conceived a child might also demonstrate her comparative innocence. Either way, her body, signalling the lust that has made her pregnant, also signals the nature of the offence for which she and Claudio are to be punished.

Juliet and Claudio are paraded before the citizens on stage as part of a display of legal authority and a ceremony of penitence. It is likely that both Juliet and Claudio wore white sheets as an indication of the sexual transgression involved in their offence. It seems likely, also, that Juliet's pregnancy would have been represented prosthetically, to match Claudio's description of her.¹⁸ Claudio complains to the Provost: 'Fellow, why dost thou show me thus to the world?/ Bear me to prison where I am committed' (1.2.96-97). Lucio does not immediately identify Claudio's offence as lechery. He asks whether Claudio has committed murder, then when lechery is named, he asks: 'Is lechery so looked after?' (1.2.121). As noted, Juliet has not looked to become pregnant and Lucio's words stress the visibility of the bodily sign that has caused the law to look at her and, because of her, at Claudio. Fornication is, in turn, theatricalised as an offence by the same spectacle—a ritual parade of Juliet and Claudio through the streets. Theatre is also implicated in generating the offence for which they are to be punished. Lucio means: 'Is this the manner in which lechery is now regarded by the law?'. Thus pregnancy cannot simply be looked at. It is necessary to know how to interpret it. Lucio's words can also imply that the visible signs of pregnancy follow 'after' the act that gives rise to it, stressing pregnancy as a condition which reveals visually what takes place beforehand, in 'stealth'.

When Lucio asks Claudio: 'What's thy offence...?', Claudio first says: 'What but to speak of would offend again' (1.2.114-115). His words imply a prudery about saying what he has done, at odds with his almost immediate description that he 'got possession of Julietta's bed' and his avowal of their mutual pleasure. They are similar to Isabella's: 'That I should do what I abhor to name' (3.1.100) and 'Sir,

¹⁷ Anne Laurence argues that women relied on abstinence, *coitus interruptus* and prolonged nursing, *Women in England: 1500-1760: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994; published in paperback by Phoenix/ Orion Books, 1996), 63-65. Crawford states that couples used abstinence, *coitus interruptus*, oral, anal and manual sex, abortion before the child had quickened, and that there was a thriving trade in contraceptives and abortifacients, at least by the later part of the seventeenth century, as evidenced in advertisements. 'Sexual Knowledge in England, 1500-1750', Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds. and intro.), *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 82-106, at 98-99. John Riddle suggests that although sixteenth and seventeenth century manuals did not contain advice about contraception or abortion, the information was available to apothecaries through medieval texts, enabling them to cater for women's needs and that they conducted a thriving, if underhand business. *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 140-148, 156-157.

¹⁸ W. Robertson Davies, in 1939, concluded that Juliet's part is unimportant to *Measure for Measure* but is an example of 'the mingled conventionality and realism of Elizabethan acting', that she appears in the scene to provide evidence of Claudio's guilt, and that the boy playing her would have been padded. See *Shakespeare's Boy Actors*, 72-73.

make me not your story' (1.4.29), which implies that she does not wish to hear about sexual behaviour. Claudio's reference to naming implies that, until it is named, activity is legally neutral but the law, as is made clear in Act 1, scene 3, already names fornication as a sexual offence, part of a set of 'strict statutes and most biting laws' (1.3.19). The Duke describes how they have been allowed to lapse through lack of use (1.3.20-31).

The theatricality of the process whereby the authority and power of the ruler is created by demonstrating the vice of the subjects is reflected in a complex series of metaphors used by Claudio. He explains to Lucio that the new deputy is responsible for the awakening of old laws which have, for fourteen years, 'like unsoured armour, hung by th' wall.../ And none of them been worn; and for a name/ Now puts the drowsy and neglected act/ Freshly on me' (1.2.134-148). The audience knows that it is the Duke, not the deputy, who is responsible for reviving the laws. But Angelo does seek to make his 'name', by punishing Claudio and Juliet: he seeks to make his reputation as a strong enforcer of long-time neglected laws. Angelo's justification for imposing the sentence is that the efficacy of the law depends on its enforcement. He says to Isabella: 'Those many had not dared to do that evil/ If the first that did th'edict infringe/ Had answered for his deed' (2.2.93-95). For fornication to constitute a true offence it is not sufficient that it be named in the law. The law must be enforced by applying the name of fornicator to individual transgressors and by acting out their punishment for the public to witness. Angelo calls Juliet 'the fornicatress' (2.2.23) and arranges for the publicity of their initial punishment. Naming is like adopting a costume. Claudio likens the law to a suit of armour which has been allowed to rust. Angelo will renew the laws, equivalent to donning the armour, and thus rearming the state. But his performance requires that Claudio and Juliet perform their roles as offenders. They will now wear the signs of Angelo's zeal, represented in their penitential costumes. Thus the theatrical operation of the law generates the offence.

'Why, you are nothing then; neither maid, widow, nor wife!'

Although pregnancy, even within marriage, was associated with lust, Diana O'Hara notes that, in practice, marriage 'was supposed to mark the end of youth, a change of status and the formation of a new productive partnership, sexually legitimised, economically viable and fundamental to social harmony'.¹⁹ The Duke gives voice to a predominant early modern sentiment that marital status is of prime importance in judging a woman's reproductive status, when he says to Mariana: 'Why, you are nothing then; neither maid, widow, nor wife!' (5.1.176). Lucio points out that a 'punk' (prostitute) is often not a maid, widow or wife (5.1.177). While the Duke orders him to be silenced, Lucio's words represent the commonly held opinion that a woman who could not fit herself to any of the acceptable categories must, by definition, be a whore. But as discussed below, although marital status was so

¹⁹ Diana O'Hara, *Courtship and constraint: Rethinking the making of marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press; distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1. O'Hara's work is based on a study of records in the Canterbury diocese up to the end of the sixteenth century. She notes that no previous studies had been made of this material, other scholars basing their conclusions on records from the north and west of England, London, East Anglia and Wessex (8). No previous studies have concentrated on courtship as a 'holistic' process or on the sixteenth century (2).

significant that it was the primary factor in determining a woman's legal, social and moral position, it was not always clear how a particular woman should be categorised and to some extent this was reflected in women's clothes. For example, women in different stages of life wore different headgear so that, from a distance, it should have been possible to know whether a woman was maid, widow or wife from observing what she wore on her head, but the signals could be confusing.²⁰ Further, although the use of 'punk' by Lucio might specifically relate to a prostitute, the distinction between prostitution and other forms of sexual immorality was difficult to determine.²¹

When the meaning of a pregnancy depended so much on the woman's marital status, it might be expected that at least the woman herself should have been able to determine whether she was maid or wife and regulate her sexual activity accordingly. This was not the case. There are five inter-related issues which I will discuss in this order: the involvement of family and other kin in marriage formation; the legal system under which Claudio and Juliet have been convicted; whether they can be regarded as man and wife; whether, if they are man and wife, Juliet's pregnancy is still suspect because their marriage has not been celebrated with due formality; and the severity of the penalty.

The behaviour of Juliet and Claudio may have infringed early seventeenth century courtship rituals. Sara Mendelson and Crawford argue that courtship for most early modern women 'was like a lengthy series of private negotiations....'²² Men and women tended to marry at relatively late ages and the practice of young women going out to service when they were in their mid-teens, away from their parents' sphere and influence established a 'culture of courtship' in which many social occasions gave scope for groups and individuals to mix with the opposite sex (110-111). But plebeian young women were 'by no means isolated from the help and interference of the community, especially in its female guise' (121). The parents or friends of upper class couples were often closely involved in the process of marriage formation (112). O'Hara questions the degree of freedom of choice available to young people in courtship, finding even among scholars who place stress on the 'variable framework' and 'lack of uniformity', a tendency to emphasise 'the freedom and initiative in courtship taken by young people' as characteristic of 'the middling and, particularly, the ordinary ranks' (6). Her study found that decisions about marriage affected family, friends, neighbours and the wider community, led to restructuring of kin

²⁰ Nancy Bradfield says that long hair out of doors indicated that a woman was unmarried, *Historical Costumes of England* (London: Harrap, Third edition, 1970), 83. C. Willett Cunningham and Phillis Cunningham do not distinguish between married and single women: 'To be bareheaded outdoors as well as in was fashionable all through the seventeenth century', *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, Second edition 1966), 108. See also Marion Sichel, who states that the fashion was not to cover the head but, to a limited extent, women still did so, *Costume Reference: Jacobean, Stuart and Restoration* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1977), Vol. 3, 26-31.

²¹ For the definition of 'punk' as prostitute, see *Norton Shakespeare*, 5.1.177-178, marginal note; Bawcutt, 5.1.179-180, fn.. 'Punk' is an obsolete term for 'a prostitute, strumpet or harlot' (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 1709). For a description of the merging of categories of unchaste women, see Faramarz Dabhoiwala, 'The pattern of sexual immorality in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London', Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner (eds and intro.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the cultural and social history of early modern London* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000; distributed in the United States by St Martin's Press), 86-106, at 88-92.

²² Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 108-123, at 116.

groups and social restructuring when newcomers entered communities. Property rights were almost invariably affected, no matter how poor the parties. Individuals held interests in the marriages of others that went well beyond property, extending to questions of honour, reputation and morality. Thus, as well as the expectation of some kind of social parity, 'moral parity was conventionally expected' (30-31). O'Hara concludes that 'more structure and ritual coherence' was involved in courtship and marriage than has been imagined (31). Further, the involvement of different people at various stages in the process, was not simply a matter of publication, 'but interpreted as an expression of kin and community control' (31).²³ O'Hara describes the 'kin' who appear in Canterbury court depositions: parents, siblings and extended family, 'the surrogate family of masters, mistresses and fellow servants...and a range of what may loosely be termed "fictive kin"', meaning godparents, friends of relatives and the like.²⁴ Whatever their legal situation, as discussed below, Juliet and Claudio have not involved their families or friends. Juliet has those kin or others who control her finances and Claudio has a sister who, even as she opts for life within the convent, has concepts of honour which might be offended by a marriage between her brother and Juliet. Isabella had identified Juliet as: 'My cousin Juliet?....Adoptedly, as schoolmaids change their names/ By vain though apt affection' (1.4.44-47), as if she does not hold her in high regard.

The second issue is the jurisdiction in which the couple have been tried: London or Vienna or an amalgam of both and, if London, the appropriate legal system. Leah Marcus notes problems in interpreting *Measure for Measure* depending on the setting of the play.²⁵ She concludes that *Measure for Measure* oscillates between 'Stuart propaganda,...the expression of a contemporary nightmare, or most likely...both together' (200). She also argues that scholars have mistaken the legal system under which Juliet is imprisoned and Claudio is to die, and that the Duke's words to Escalus about the 'terms/ For common justice' (1.1.10-11) identified him and Angelo as following the basic pattern of London Justices of the Peace (176-177). In this case, the penalty is much harsher than any English court would have imposed. But when what is represented on stage is both similar to and different from local conditions, meaning is generated through comparing the similarities and differences. In *Measure for Measure* this is further complicated because, just as social attitudes to the behaviour of Juliet and Claudio were not uniform, there were two court systems—one administering ecclesiastical law and the other administering the common law. The same behaviour could be dealt with in either court with different results especially in the severity of the punishment. My discussion focuses mainly on the ambiguity of the early seventeenth century law administered by the church courts in interpreting the 'true contract' of Claudio and Juliet. I note, however, that it was not a church court, but the Duke, who was responsible for the issue of the

²³ Eric Josef Carlson states that a reader of cause papers in the ecclesiastical courts 'can find evidence for any view of the role of parents in the final stages of courtship' (122) although 'parents or other kin are mentioned in only about 25 percent of court cases', *Marriage and the English Reformation* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 1994), 122.

²⁴ O'Hara, 38 and 51, fn. 26. Courtship is discussed further in Chapter Two on *All's Well That Ends Well*.

²⁵ Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley, Cal. and London: University of California Press, 1988), 160-202, at 164.

proclamation ordering that brothels be demolished: 'All houses in the suburbs of Vienna must be plucked down' (1.2.78).

In England, ecclesiastical courts were centred on cathedrals, with a network of judicial officers and parish officials like churchwardens. They handled ecclesiastical matters, prosecuted and punished sexual offenders for adultery, fornication, irregular marriages and unlawful separation. Those found guilty were disciplined, with a view to reforming their behaviour. Church courts also dealt with such matters as usury, drunkenness and scolding, issued marriage licences and dealt with suits between parties over marriage contracts and with petitions for separations and annulments. Their jurisdiction thus extended well beyond church regulation or the cure of individual souls, although, as Martin Ingram points out, the theoretical goal was not to exact retribution for offences, but the reform of the culprits.²⁶ The church courts were regarded with animosity by some communities and Puritan critics found in them a survival of popery. Court officials, many of whom were laymen, were attacked as venal and corrupt. Another ground for attack was the penalties for sexual offences, which were criticised as too lenient.²⁷ Any idea of the ecclesiastical courts as austere places is dispelled by the description by Richard M. Wunderli of London's commissary court as 'alive with proctors, priests, compurgators, prostitutes, summoners and suitors—all jostling one another for a turn in court'.²⁸

In the 'Vienna/ London' of *Measure for Measure*, the same system deals with all sexual offences, thus conflating the church and common law court jurisdictions. In my view, this serves to highlight problems with the operation of the law in early seventeenth century London. Even before the inherent corruption of the system is indicated by Angelo's sexual blackmail, the sense that all is not working as it should be is suggested by the Duke's capacity to slip between the temporal and the spiritual, in his disguise as Friar. Ingram argues that the distinction between 'sin' and 'crime' was less well understood than it is today (3). But from before the Reformation, church courts had been understood to be quite separate from the administration of the sacrament of penance or the relationship between individuals and their confessors (Wunderli, 85). Private confession was seen by the Reformed Church as a barrier between the conscience of individual Christians and God. But the courts were often involved at the birth of children. The Duke's questions to Juliet in Act 2, scene 3, are a reminder of the practice, described by Ralph Houlbrooke, of attempting to force a single woman to divulge the name of the father, often using the midwife to question the woman during labour.²⁹

²⁶ Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3. Ingram, whose study is based on church courts in Salisbury and Wiltshire, deals with pre-nuptial fornication and bridal pregnancy at 219-237.

²⁷ Ingram, 4-5.

²⁸ Richard M. Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1981), 15. Wunderli's study is of dioceses in London.

²⁹ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation, 1520-1570* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 77. The goal was to ensure that the child would not be a burden on the parish. Houlbrooke's study is of the dioceses of Winchester and Norwich. If the father's name was not divulged during labour, officials warned the woman that the child would not be baptised or that she would not be churched, Mendelson and Crawford, 148. See also Ingram, 263.

Measure for Measure thus recognises the complexities and potential injustice of a system in which sexual offences are dealt with by church courts and also by the common law, where church and state collaborate to control sexuality but are also distinguished, and where different classes of sexual offence were likely to be distinguished in practice, depending on a combination of rank and sex.³⁰ While all the characters in *Measure for Measure* are dealt with by the same system, Mistress Overdone, arrested in Act 3, scene 1, (3.4.420), does not receive any of the pardons handed out by the Duke, who even imposes a pardon on Barnadine, a murderer. When Lucio questions Claudio about his offence, he puts murder at the head of the list, followed by lechery (1.2.116-119). At the end of *Measure for Measure*, murder is apparently classed as the lesser evil.

I now turn to the third issue, the status of Claudio and Juliet under a contract of marriage. Claudio describes a 'true contract' under which he 'got possession of Julietta's bed'. Under the system of 'spousals', a couple could marry by an immediately binding contract, if the words were spoken in the present tense (*per verba de praesenti*)—'I do' as opposed to 'I will'. Henry Swinburne's *A Treatise of Spousals, or Matrimonial Contracts* describes 'Spousals *de praesenti*' as 'in Truth and Substance very Matrimony indissoluble'.³¹ There was no requirement for an official or public ceremony, or the presence of an authorised celebrant, and no prescriptions as to ritual, place or time. Nor was it necessary for the contract to be in writing or even to be witnessed, although if one party sought to avoid the contract or if the status of a pregnant woman was cast into doubt, a witness was useful. 'Handfasting' was a colloquial term for spousals evoked in Claudio's words: 'she is fast my wife'. A different kind of contract to marry in the future (*de futuro*) sometimes named the day for a marriage but might also depend on the fulfilment of conditions, and only became binding when a dowry was paid or a family gave its consent. Both forms of contract became binding if the parties had sexual intercourse, with the effect of renouncing any conditions attached to a *de futuro* contract (Swinburne, 121; Ingram, 190).

The fact that a binding marriage could be formed through an informal contract gave scope for 'uncertainty, moral ambiguities and opportunities for deceit and fraud' (Ingram, 133). The distinction between *de praesenti* and *de futuro* contracts sounds clear-cut but this was not the case.³² Further, where Swinburne describes spousals *de praesenti* as 'in Truth and Substance very Matrimony indissoluble', he also appears to distinguish 'spousals' from 'pure and perfect Matrimony' (121). Henrie Smith distinguished the contract and the marriage in his *A Preparatiue to Marriage*: 'Euerie

³⁰ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, comments that: 'Offenders of substantial wealth or gentle birth were seldom dealt with by the courts in [Norwich or Winchester]' (79).

³¹ Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Spousals, or Matrimonial Contracts* (London, 1686), 75. The work was published well after Swinburne died in 1624.

³² See Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 57, O'Hara, 10-11 and, on the implications of words used in gift-giving, O'Hara, 82-87. Complex legal arguments developed so that a simple distinction between present and future tenses was complicated by distinctions between 'the *entrance* or *beginning*' of marriage, words relating to 'the *end* or *execution*' of marriage and words relating: 'neither to the *beginning* nor to the *ending*, nor to any Accident, but to the *Substance* of the Act; as [*I will be thy Husband &c.....*]' (Swinburne, 74). They also disputed whether descriptions of the woman as 'wife' constituted a contract *de praesenti* regardless of the tense used (Swinburne, 77).

Marriage before it bee knit should bee contracted'.³³ There was obviously great scope for confusion about the effect of the words used in contracting spousals. There was also scope for disputes between the parties about the exact words used, about what they intended and about what they thought the other party intended. Even where there were witnesses, who could recall what was said, the complexity of the legal arguments shows that much more was required than a recollection of whether the words were in the present or future tense. It appears, then, that marriage contracts might be regarded as a form of betrothal or a form of marriage and that the legal details were too complex to allow any certainty of interpretation.

In *Measure for Measure*, the situations of Juliet and Claudio and of Mariana and Angelo are confused. But, in both cases, the decision whether or not to marry, in Angelo's case, or to make a spousals contract public, in the case of Juliet and Claudio, is linked to finance, and is thus, in some ways, similar to a transaction in a brothel. Claudio speaks of their 'true contract' and speaks of Juliet as 'fast my wife'. This may be because they were married through a contract *de praesenti* or because he thinks they were: however, each of them describes their behaviour as immoral. They have deliberately kept their liaison secret until they are happy that Juliet's 'friends' (parents, other family or guardians who control her finances) will give their approval and transfer her dowry, possibly suggesting that their contract was conditional only. In either case, they would now be bound by the contract because of their sexual relations. The Duke tells Isabella that Mariana was 'affianced to her oath'; and the wedding date fixed, except that her brother and her dowry were lost at sea: 'There she lost a noble and renowned brother, in his love to her ever most kind and natural; with him, the portion and sinew of her fortune, her marriage dowry; with both, her combinate husband, this well-seeming Angelo' (3.1.210-219).³⁴ In terms of English law, 'affianced to her oath' implies a combination of betrothal and a contract *de futuro*, conditional on the payment of her dowry, so that Angelo's withdrawal from the contract might be justified under law when the dowry was lost. But his attempts to dishonour Mariana's good name, suggesting that 'her reputation was disvalued/ In levity...' (5.1.216-218), imply that he considers himself bound unless he can find a way to discredit her. The Duke as Friar has told Mariana she is free to lie with Angelo because he is already her 'husband on a pre-contract' (4.1.67-69) and Mariana who denies she is married (5.1.182) speaks of Angelo as her 'husband' (5.1.184).

I now turn to the fourth issue, the appropriate formalities to celebrate a marriage. Juliet and Claudio have not been married in church. Following the Council of Trent in 1563, all marriages in Catholic countries in Europe were required to be celebrated before a parish priest and Ingram notes that similar changes were made in European Protestant countries (132). The timing of the change in England from private contract to public church ceremony was less straightforward, taking place gradually and with regional differences. Richard Adair describes a shift to a public ceremony performed in church by member of the church, according to an understood set of rules to do with the administration of a sacrament, but he notes that the exact timing

³³ Henrie Smith, *A Preparatiue to Marriage* (London, 1591; fac. rpt. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Norwood, N. J.: Walter J. Johnson, 1975; English Experience series, Vol. 762), 1.

³⁴ 'Combinate' means 'betrothed', 3.1.218, marginal note. Bawcutt states that 'combinate husband' is likely to mean 'contracted' or 'betrothed' but, in a different context might mean 'married', 3.1.24, fn.

and degree of the shift in established attitudes remains controversial.³⁵ Ingram also outlines a shift towards public solemnisation in church, in place by the time of the early Stuarts (132). Common law courts were also encouraging church solemnisation of marriage by this time, by requiring proof of a church ceremony for certain property settlements (Ingram, 132), so that a couple in the position of Claudio and Juliet would have to wait for a ceremony before property could be transferred.

Despite the hostility of the church to couples who treated spousals as equivalent to marriage, a valid and binding marriage could still be created by an informal contract so that a couple could find themselves in what appears to us to be a truly anomalous position. They could be bound to each other in marriage because of a contractual obligation but liable to be punished by the church courts because they engaged in intercourse without church solemnisation (Adair, 146). Over a long period, moralists had denounced intercourse before a church marriage as sinful or, at least, 'unwarrantable and dishonest'.³⁶ The courts had imposed penalties of varying degrees, as discussed below. It was obviously safer to wait for the church ceremony.

There is clear evidence that regardless of the attacks of moralists and the potential dangers, many early seventeenth century couples anticipated the church ceremony and that this was treated with tolerance by some communities. Ingram cites Philip Hair's estimate, based on a sampling of parish registers of marriages and baptisms that, nationally, about one-fifth of brides were pregnant when they married, the percentage in different parishes ranged from ten per cent to fifty per cent, indicating a great distinction in practice between different parts of the country. (Ingram, 157).³⁷ In London, the percentage of pregnant brides was only sixteen percent.³⁸ Not all of society was relaxed about couples engaging in sex before a church ceremony and between 1570 and 1640 there was a sharp increase in prosecutions for pre-nuptial fornication and bridal pregnancy (Ingram, 219).³⁹ Allowing for regional differences, it appears that early seventeenth century England was a society that had been comparatively lax about the requirement for church solemnisation and the punishment of sexual activity by contracted couples and was now enforcing the law more vigorously.

The penalties imposed by the church courts for sexual intercourse outside a solemnised marriage had, in the past, been extremely severe. Although offenders were not put to death, the process was humiliating. Ralph Houlbrooke describes the pre-Reformation system of public penance where the penitent was part of a

³⁵ *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996; distributed in the United States and Canada by St Martin's Press), 143.

³⁶ See Ingram, 155; Gouge, 198-203, at 203. Gouge creates a category between maid and wife, 'neither simply single, nor actually married' (199).

³⁷ Ingram cites Philip E. H. Hair 'Bridal pregnancy in rural England in earlier centuries', *Population studies*, 20 (1966), 233-243 and 'Bridal pregnancy in earlier rural England further examined', *Population Studies* 24, (1970), 59-70 (Ingram, 157). Adair discusses studies of early modern bridal pregnancies at 105-107.

³⁸ Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London, 1580-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Table 7.13 at 150. See also Mendelson and Crawford, 149.

³⁹ While bastardy was not so common as bridal pregnancy, it was not unusual, see Finlay, Table 7.12, at 149. He calculates an illegitimacy ratio of 2% for London, compared with a national ratio of roughly 2.3%. Ingram gives an overall illegitimacy ratio of about 3% at the end of Elizabeth's reign (Ingram, 157-158).

procession, barefoot and dressed in a sheet, often with a placard stating the offence.⁴⁰ The ceremony had a didactic purpose of which the Protestant Church took advantage (46). Penance might be required more than once, in more than one church and in the market-place (46). The ceremony often included a beating, although by the early seventeenth century this had died out in some dioceses.⁴¹ Ingram's study also identifies a trend by the early seventeenth century, for the church courts to impose lighter penances, especially in cases of bridal pregnancy or where the couple was betrothed, perhaps by allowing them to wear their own clothes or by performing penance in semi-private (236). These lower penalties ran contrary to the increase in prosecutions for bridal pregnancy. Further, as the authorities aimed for more and more publicity surrounding marriage, the penalties for pre-marital sex imposed by the ecclesiastical courts became less public. By comparison, the penalties imposed by London justices for sexual offenders in the early seventeenth century, far stricter than the penances in church courts at the time: 'whipping, shaving the head, public carting, and jail' (Marcus, 175).⁴²

As discussed above, there is a range of opinions among the other characters in *Measure for Measure* about what Juliet and Claudio have done and the play demonstrates how difficult it is to make any firm judgement about matters of marital status and the injustice of laws which expect that such decisions can be made with certainty. The injustice is heightened by the use of Juliet's pregnancy to give new life to laws which had lapsed, so that she and Claudio are forcibly enlisted to act out the illegality of conduct which was legally neutral when committed. The Duke's inconsistent behaviour further complicates the issues. He has insisted on the enforcement of laws which punish sexuality with death and has described Juliet's foetus as 'sin'. But he directs Mariana that behaviour which is the same as that for which another couple are to be punished, is morally acceptable. The play offers no hope of a more certain future. There is no suggestion that, given the difficulties of judging properly, the law should not make such sharp distinctions between women, based on their marital status. The 'pardoning' of Claudio by the Duke affirms that Claudio committed an offence (5.1.485). By instructing Claudio: 'She Claudio, that you wronged, look you restore' (5.1.518), the Duke also makes it clear that Juliet has offended and that she can only be restored through marriage.

Thus Juliet's pregnancy does not symbolise a renewed system of justice in which individuals can know where they stand and act accordingly. As for her physical pregnancy, it is assessed solely by reference to the morality and legality of the conception, concepts which remain as indeterminate at the end of the play as they were at the beginning. As discussed below, Juliet is described as 'groaning' and arrangements are being made for the birth of her child but there is no interest expressed at the end of the play in her physical well-being or that of the child to which she has presumably given birth. The play ends as it begins, with a pregnancy that is only of interest as an occasion of sin, but for which the parties are now to be

⁴⁰ Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, 46.

⁴¹ Houlbrooke notes that in 1576, 'J.P.s were empowered to whip the parents of bastard children—a tacit acknowledgment of the failure of sexual discipline by the church courts?', 'The decline of ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the Tudors', Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal, *Continuity and change: Personnel and administration of the Church in England 1500-1642* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976), 239-257, at 245.

⁴² See also, Mendelson and Crawford, 148.

forgiven, rather than punished. There are no grounds for treating Juliet's pregnancy as a sign of a fruitful future.

In the following section, I look very briefly at some other women characters in the play whose status is also uncertain, either because they are on the boundary between one state and another or because what appears to be a clear-cut classification of a woman as a 'wife' becomes confused.

**'Marry, sir, by my wife, who if she had been a woman
cardinally given, might have been accused in fornication,
adultery, and all uncleanness there'**

Mariana, like Juliet, is somewhere between the status of maid and wife. Although the Duke told her that 'To bring you thus together is no sin' (4.1.69) because Angelo 'is your husband on a pre-contract' (4.2.68), he insists that Angelo and she marry (5.1.369). Isabella is also on the boundary between one state and another. She is a maid because she is not married and soon, under the law of the Catholic church, she will be married to God.⁴³ But the state to which she aspires does not fit within any of the acceptable categories and, at the end of the play, her status as a novice is threatened by the Duke's proposal of marriage. She does not reply and, as the play ends, it is unclear whether his proposal will meet with her approval and what her options are if she wishes to reject it. Her wish to lock herself away in the convent might appear to be contrasted with Claudio's 'restraint' as the consequences of too much liberty, and his resulting lustful actions with Juliet. But when Isabella questions Sister Francesca and asks whether the nuns have 'farther privileges', she says: 'I speak not as desiring more,/ But rather wishing a more strict restraint' (1.4.3-4). She thus links desire with restraint, a desire whose sexual aspects are made much more obvious later in the play, summed up in her words:

...were I under the terms of death,
Th'impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed
That longing have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame. (2.4.100-104)

In a city where a woman caught with an illegitimate child might be flogged, the idea of a woman engaging in erotic flagellation under the guise of religion would have added an unpleasant irony.⁴⁴

Elbow's wife is another woman whose status is uncertain, known only through the short comic exchange about what took place when she went to Mistress Overdone's 'house', itself a marginal territory, described by Elbow: 'if it be not a bawd's house,

⁴³ Her exact position is viewed differently by different people. Claudio says: 'This day my sister should the cloister enter' (1.2.154). But she is 'yet unsworn', and can thus open the door and talk to men, actions prohibited for the nuns (1.4.7-13). The Provost tells Angelo that Isabella is 'shortly to be of a sisterhood,/ If not already' (2.2.21-22). She tells the Duke how 'I, in probation of a sisterhood,' went to Angelo to plead for Claudio. (5.1.72-74).

⁴⁴ See Carolyn E. Brown: 'Erotic Religious Flagellation and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986), 139-165. Brown describes the widespread use of flagellation in the Catholic church, 'as a systematic part of daily monastic life', in which the religious were flogged more harshly even than lay penitents (141-142). Not surprisingly, as Brown points out, 'the purest penitential exercise also contained the seeds for immorality' (144). She describes accounts of excesses in Europe, well-known by word of mouth and also in material available in England (147-148).

it is pity of her life, for it is a naughty house' (2.1.69-70).⁴⁵ Pompey explains that Mistress Elbow came to Mistress Overdone's house 'great with child and longing—saving your honour's reverence—for stewed prunes' (2.1.82-83). The implication is that she desires the prunes so strongly, because she has a pregnant longing. Pompey's words thus associate the condition of pregnancy with a lack of control that leads the pregnant woman into a place of potential danger. Because 'prunes' is *double entendre* for testicles, there is also the implication that she went to the bawdy house for a sexual encounter.⁴⁶ The desire for strange foods experienced by pregnant women, called 'The Pica', is discussed in Chapters Five and Six, on *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Bartholomew Fair*, respectively. Mistress Elbow's longing is a reminder that even an apparently respectable woman is likely to behave in a disorderly manner when pregnant and that, when what prompts her is the Pica, it is better to let her give in to it because to do otherwise might lead to injury to herself or her child. It is also a reminder that it is not necessary for a pregnant woman to behave in a disorderly manner to be accused of sexual impropriety or misconduct. Elbow says:

Marry, sir, by my wife, who if she had been a woman cardinally given, might have been accused in fornication, adultery, and all uncleanness there. (2.1.72-74)

Pompey's words about Elbow's wife, for example, 'being great-bellied, and longing as I said for prunes' (2.1.91-92), might appear to place it beyond doubt that pregnancy, as in Juliet's case, is always capable of being established through visual signs. But Mistress Elbow is not a character in *Measure for Measure* and her pregnancy is solely a matter of language, confused because Elbow misunderstands what he is saying, in a way that provides sexual innuendo, and Pompey capitalises on Elbow's misconceptions to confuse matters further.⁴⁷ For example, Elbow's use of 'respected' for 'suspected' leads Pompey to claim: 'By this hand, sir, his wife is a more respected person than any of us all' (2.1.148-149). Elbow responds that: 'The time is yet to come that she was ever respected with man, woman, nor child' (2.1.150-153). Pompey claims: 'Sir, she was respected with him before he married with her' (2.1.153), which would mean that Elbow and his wife had committed the same offence for which Claudio is to die and Juliet will be imprisoned. Elbow says:

I respected with her before I was married to her? If ever I was respected with her, or she with me, let not your worship think me the poor Duke's officer. (2.1.157-159)

If 'respected' means 'suspected', and all suspicions relate to sexual activity, the denial by Elbow of 'ever being respected with her or she with me' appears to be a

⁴⁵ As discussed in the Introduction, the antitheatricalists linked theatre with unsavoury sexuality. *Measure for Measure* makes an oblique reference through a discussion of the demolition of the 'houses' [brothels] in the suburbs (1.2.76-91) and Claudio's explanation of his 'restraint': 'From too much liberty, my Lucio, liberty' (1.2.105), which suggests the Liberties of the City of London, in which the authorities strived so unsuccessfully to restrain theatres and brothels. See Mullaney, 22. But see Dabhoiwala, on the alehouses, taverns and coffee-houses which provided rooms for customers for sexual activity, and the private houses where behaviour akin to prostitution took place, as well as the transactions that took place in alleys, parks or fields, 93.

⁴⁶ See 2.1.82-83, fn.6. As I commented above, Mistress Overdone, the keeper of the 'house', is arrested during the play but is not mentioned by name when pardons are handed out.

⁴⁷ Elbow consistently misuses language: 'benefactors' for 'malefactors', 'precise' for 'precious', 'detest' for 'protest', 'cardinally' for 'carnally', 'respected' for 'suspected' and so on. See 2.1.47, 2.1.51, 2.1.63, 2.1.73, 2.1.145.

denial of having sex with his wife which might, therefore, seem to deny her pregnancy. The exchange is thus another example of the difficulty of making sound legal or moral judgments, in this case because it is impossible to discover what took place. At the same time, it highlights the manner in which judgements about women are made by placing them in different categories, in Mistress Elbow's case, the category of pregnancy.

The validity of pregnancy in *Measure for Measure* thus depends on the woman's marital status, which in turn depends on legal judgements which are impossible to determine with clarity and on moral assertions that are subject to change. In the case of Elbow's wife, it is even impossible to judge with certainty that she is pregnant.

The pregnant boy in *Measure for Measure*

When the Duke turns on Mariana in Act 5, scene 1, and tells her: 'Why, you are nothing, then: neither maid, woman, nor wife!', Lucio intervenes with his comment about Mariana being a 'punk' (5.1.176-178). Lucio thus adds to the three acceptable categories of early modern womanhood the fourth unacceptable category of prostitute. What the early modern audience saw was a young woman whose marital status is unclear and who has had questionable sexual relations with Angelo, an act similar to that for which another couple have been sentenced by the law. That young woman was played by a boy actor. The exchange was a direct invitation to the audience to note that the Duke's words are correct in stating that Mariana does not fit into any of the acceptable categories for a woman but incorrect because she is not 'nothing'. She is a 'something' which is other than a woman: a boy, or a something which is strange, a boy/woman.

In the words of Lisa Jardine, in *Still Harping*, an exchange of this kind is a 'reference point' to the boy actor playing Mariana, as discussed in the Introduction. Audience awareness of the lack of definition between different gender categories for a woman is thus heightened by their knowledge of the sex of the actor playing Mariana.

Lucio's words might also be taken to identify the boy actor as a spectacle for the homoerotic gaze of men in the audience, as Jardine argues. The exchange can also remind us that, for the early moderns, only a woman could be nothing. In *Measure for Measure*, a man who is not what he seems or whose behaviour is ambiguous is not, because of that, translated into nothing. The play demonstrates the problems of assessing the male characters based on the way they choose to present themselves, so for example, Lucio might be a lecherous blabbermouth or the one person in the play who manages to articulate some unsatisfactory truths. All of them are still men. Only a woman could be described as nothing.

The 'fascination with substitutability', identified by Maus in *Measure for Measure*, suggests that one body can be substituted for another. Angelo who has abandoned Mariana and conceived a passion for Isabella is unable to tell the difference in the most intimate encounter. If one body can be mistaken for another so easily, the implication is that sexual desire itself is established through theatrical means, that it was partly Isabella's 'prone and speechless dialect' that created the desire in Angelo but, once established, the desire could be satisfied by any other woman. The implication is that the desire could also be satisfied by a boy.

I suggest that it would also have drawn attention to the boy actor's body, culminating in the Duke's words to Isabella, as the play ends: 'What's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine.' (5.1.530), a proverbial expression but one, when spoken to a boy

playing a woman, might also imply that there will eventually be a genital correspondence which can never occur between a man and a woman.

Neither Isabella nor Mariana is pregnant but I suggest that the references which would have drawn attention to the boys who acted their roles would have enhanced the very strong references to the boy playing Juliet. The boy actor who played her did not have either a womb in which to carry a child or a vagina into which a man could emit seed and thus lacked what was most physically essential in a pregnant woman. His own genitals would have caused an obstruction to conception and would prevent a normal birth. The audience was asked to speculate on Juliet's body as a pregnant woman's body while it learned about the ambiguity of her marital status. For the drama to develop, audience members were required to make some judgement about how Juliet's pregnancy should be interpreted, from among the welter of possibilities about the legal and moral implications of Claudio's speech about their 'true contract' and their 'mutual entertainment'. While this was taking place, there was a reminder, at the metatheatrical level, that it was a boy playing Juliet and that that boy could not have conceived a child. A distinction understood in early modern society to be both clear-cut and blurred, through the prevalence of the one-sex-model, was thus forced on audience attention: the distinction between the creatures that beget in others and those that beget in themselves.

I do not suggest that an early modern audience at such a point in a play focused so solidly on the metatheatrical aspects of the performance that nothing else was significant. But I argue that, when members of an audience at an early performance of *Measure for Measure*, were asked to examine a woman's body on stage as bearing the sign of prior intercourse which has led to conception, the presence of the boy actor would have made itself noticed, to some degree. The concept of 'oscillation' described by Peter Stallybrass and discussed in the Introduction is useful to describe the process whereby the boy actor's presence would have contributed to the dramatic effect. In general, I suggest that the effect of the boy playing the pregnant Juliet would have been to enhance the sense of indeterminacy that permeates the play.

But the fact that Juliet was played by a boy, also heightens the theatricality with which her pregnancy is used by the legal system. When Juliet first appears, Claudio says: 'The stealth of our most mutual entertainment/ With character too gross is writ on Juliet' (1.2.131-132). His words explain the situation that has led him and Juliet to their punishment, that her pregnancy has revealed itself on her body and thus disclosed prior conduct, which is now counted as criminal by the law. But his words also required the early modern audience to attend to the fact that what could be seen on Juliet's body was not a real pregnancy but an acted one. I have argued that the effect of parading the couple is to revivify laws which have lapsed so that Juliet's pregnancy is acted as a spectacle of punishment. The metatheatrical knowledge that the figure of the pregnant Juliet was a boy, and thus could not be pregnant, would have stressed the deliberate theatricality of the public spectacle and the travesty of justice it entailed. Further, none of the characters who make judgements about what has taken place are correct because a boy's body cannot betray the signs of prior sexual activity leading to pregnancy. All it can display is a woman's dress with something like a cushion under it and the implication for members of the audience who thought they could read a woman's secret actions from her physical appearance is that they might find they were mistaken.

Because the theatricality of the boy actor is presented early in the play, references to Juliet's pregnancy can also be read as a comment on performance, especially to the

prosthesis as a form of costume. Claudio's words are complicated because he seems to say that it is not the act of coition but the secrecy of it that is written on Juliet's body.

Mary Thomas Crane interprets Claudio's words as suggesting that

It is the secret and stealthy nature of their sexual act that seems here to lead, paradoxically, to its public revelation, as if even the most private penetration inevitably and indelibly marks its participants.⁴⁸

Crane notes that 'character' means a 'distinctive mark, impressed, engraved...a brand, stamp' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. III, 30-32) and 'gross' refers to Juliet's gravid appearance and the taint of gross behaviour associated with other images of eating and fullness.⁴⁹ I suggest that while Claudio's general account of their stealth and mutual entertainment invites the audience to imagine sexual penetration, his description of Juliet suggests that what she bears on her body is a thing applied externally, like a costume. Writing and other forms of impression, like stamping and marking, are not identical to the donning of a theatrical costume. As Crane points out, the mark described by Claudio is indelible, at least while Juliet is pregnant, and there are other references to coining and marking that suggest some form of permanent mark or impression, like the scars that would follow a beating. But, coupled with the presence of the boy actor, Claudio's words undermine the idea that what has been revealed on Juliet's body is the sign of sexual activity.

Juliet's next appearance in *Measure for Measure* is the scene where the Duke (as Friar) questions Juliet her about her 'sin'. She is either in labour or very close to it. The Provost describes her in the previous scene as 'the groaning Juliet' and 'very near her hour' (2.2.15-16).⁵⁰ The scene strengthens the association between sex and death which Adelman and Dollimore detect in *Measure for Measure* and, because it is in a prison, it establishes a link between wombs and prisons as places of confinement. Juliet's interrogation by the Duke has overtones of the interrogation of women in labour by church courts, in the presence of the midwife, except no midwife appears.⁵¹ The presence of a man in a birthing chamber without any women present is contrary to early modern social and medical practices where childbirth was specifically a women's affair. The scene thus smacks of the kind of impropriety associated with Catholic practices. Although the scene is serious, the references to groaning and making preparations or the birth of a child would certainly have focused attention of the boy actor's body, and he might have simulated labour pains. The audience would have been reminded of the physical facts of childbirth, and of the boy who would never have to endure them.

The Duke's: 'Repent you, fair one, of the sin you carry?' (2.3.20), which conflates Juliet's foetus and sin, suggests that she carries her sin, like a pregnant woman carries

⁴⁸ Mary Thomas Crane, 'Male Pregnancy and Cognitive Permeability in *Measure for Measure*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 49 (1998), 269-292, at 281.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare used an obsolete meaning for 'gross' as an adjective: Sense I.3: 'of conspicuous magnitude; palpable, striking; plain, evident -1793', but see also, Sense IV.5: 'Extremely coarse in behaviour or morals 1532'. *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, 894.

⁵⁰ 'Groaning' suggests that Juliet is in early labour at the time. Angelo orders the Provost: 'Dispose of her/ To some more fitter place, and that with speed' (2.2.17-18) and to provide her with 'needful but not lavish means' (2.2.24).

⁵¹ See also Mendelson and Crawford, 148.

a foetus, inside her womb. The implication is that Claudio has penetrated her body. Juliet's reply 'I do, and bear the shame most patiently' (2.3.21), again implies that she bears inside her the sinful product of sexual penetration. The Duke's: 'Then was your sin of heavier kind than his' (2.3.30), also suggests both a physical pregnancy engendered through intercourse and the state of sin that was engendered at that time. But 'carry' had an alternative meaning of 'exhibit' or 'display', suggesting something applied to the body rather than engendered within it and 'bear' could mean 'to wear'.⁵² The Duke speaks of testing Juliet's penitence to determine 'if it be sound/ Or hollowly put on' (2.3.23-24).⁵³ The Duke uses 'hollow' to refer to Juliet's contrition but, in the context of a pregnant woman character played by a boy, the word would also have implied the womb, which in a chaste unmarried woman would have been hollow so that she had no sin to repent. The boy actor did not have a womb to be hollow. Although Juliet's womb would be hollow eventually, as the Duke spoke it was supposedly full with the sin which was even then attempting to emerge. In any case, 'put on' suggests a prosthesis. 'Hollowly put on' is a distinctive reminder that, when the actor was a boy, a pregnancy was never genuine but always both 'hollow' and 'put on'.

Measure for Measure depicts a world in which matters of life and death, according to the church and the law, are supposed to depend on clear-cut distinctions. A woman is either married or not married. She is either chaste or a prostitute. Actions are either legal or illegal. Behaviour can be judged as moral or immoral. Those who break the law or act immorally will know in advance what penalties will be imposed and by whom. The Duke and Angelo operate on the assumption that there is a distinction between the judge and the judged and between those who execute the law and those on whom execution is carried out. However, *Measure for Measure* disputes the possibility of making any such distinction with certainty.

When Juliet was acted by a boy, the language used about her reminded the audience that her pregnancy could not be real and that any judgements about whether she acted morally or legally were exposed as foolish. The playing of Juliet by a boy actor thus added an important metatheatrical dimension to the play for early modern audiences, a dimension crucial to *Measure for Measure*'s emphasis on the dangers of assuming that it is possible to judge any conduct with certainty.

⁵² Bawcutt argues that 'carry' was not used in the sense of 'are pregnant with' until the eighteenth century but that it had a more general meaning of 'carry around inside you' or 'exhibit or display', 2.3.19, fn. He cites the *Oxford English Dictionary*, Sense 26c, 'are pregnant with', from 1775; Senses 26 and 26b mean 'carry around with you or inside you'; Sense 28 is 'exhibit or display'. See also *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, 289. Sense II.1 of 'carry' is: '...to bear about with one; to bear ME'. Sense II.3: 'To comport, behave, demean oneself 1593'; and Sense II.6: 'To support, sustain the weight or burden of, bear 1626'. In addition to the meaning of bear, as 'give birth to' (Sense IV.2), the word 'bear' also meant 'To carry about with or upon one, to wear; to have OE' (Sense I.3); and: 'To have written or inscribed upon it 1503' (Sense II.7), *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, 169-170.

⁵³ See Bawcutt, 2.3.23, fn, who suggests that 'hollowly' may be a pun, which refers back to jokes about syphilis and hollow bones.

Chapter Two

Pregnancy as Life or Death?: *All's Well That Ends Well*

In Chapter One, I discussed pregnancy in *Measure for Measure* as a sign of past transgression, Juliet's pregnancy serving as a visual indicator of sexual activity carried on in secret and now displayed on her body. Pregnancy appears in this guise in *All's Well That Ends Well*, when Mariana, the friend of Diana and her widowed mother, warns Diana against giving in to the seductions of Bertram:

The honour of a maid is her name, and no legacy is so rich as honesty....Many a maid hath been seduced by them; and the misery is, example, that so terrible shows in the wreck of maidenhood, cannot for all that dissuade succession, but that they are limed with the twigs that threatens them. I hope I need not to advise you further, but I hope your own grace will keep you where you are, though there were no further danger known but that modesty which is so lost.
(3.5.11-25)¹

Mariana warns that even the example of so many young women ruined is not sufficient to prevent the ruin of others. Unlike the honour of a man, which can derive from military prowess and be lost through dishonesty, a woman's honour relates only to her chastity, including both the condition of chastity and a chaste reputation—and the 'further danger' of pregnancy would expose her loss of honour to the world, thus destroying her name.² Because honour depends so much on reputation, it can also be lost without a physical loss of chastity. In pursuing Diana, Bertram engages in nightly performances of 'musics' and 'songs composed/ To her unworthiness' (3.7.39-41). The performance of Bertram's desire is thus likely to lower Diana's reputation in the eyes of the neighbourhood. Although she maintains her opposition to him, her 'name' could well be lost. Diana avoids Bertram's enticements: 'He had sworn to marry me/ When his wife's dead; therefore I'll lie with him/ When I am buried' (4.2.72-74). But her participation in the 'bed trick' and her confusing performance before the King and court in Act 5, scene 3, lead to a very public assault on her name, and she is in danger of imprisonment. I argue that these deceptive signs which might be misinterpreted as a loss of Diana's honour are echoed in the signs of pregnancy, signs which are notoriously ambiguous.

Helena also presents pregnancy as a sign of sexual activity but she does not present it as shameful. Far from seeking to conceal it, she flaunts it. She treats her body as proof that she has consummated her marriage to Bertram, thus meeting what he had considered to be the impossible challenge: to 'get the ring upon my finger, which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to...' (3.2.55-57). While both *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* focus on the legal and moral circumstances in which conception took place, the sexual activity involved is thus coloured differently because of the marital status of the parties involved. In *Measure for Measure*, legal complexities and uncertainties about courtship practices

¹ *All's Well That Ends Well* was not published until the First Folio in 1623. All quotes are from the Norton Shakespeare (2175-2244). *All's Well* is listed by Andrew Gurr as a play of the Chamberlain's Men, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 303, but there are no records of any performances in the early seventeenth century. As discussed in the Introduction, while there is some doubt about the order in which they were written, I have decided to deal with *All's Well* after *Measure for Measure*.

² See Susan Snyder (ed. and intro.), *All's Well That Ends Well*, 3.5.21-23, fn.

leave scope for a high degree of moral, social and legal ambiguity about the conception of the child and about the child itself as 'sin'. Juliet and Claudio have not been married in accordance with the ideal early seventeenth century rituals and have hidden their marriage contract from the world. In *All's Well*, Helena has married Bertram very publicly and their union is blessed by the highest authorities in the land, including the King, to whom Bertram is ward, as discussed further below.

As with *Measure for Measure*, critics have found a range of meanings in *All's Well*. Rather than attempting a thorough analysis, I describe some of the material which has assisted me in forming my ideas about the acting of pregnancy in the play. Many scholars base their assessment of *All's Well* on their views about Helena and the 'bed trick'.³ Janet Adelman contrasts *All's Well* with *Measure for Measure* and finds that, despite a sense of uneasiness and 'a final queasiness about the getting of children', the final scene functions to enable shame to be deflected 'away from Helena's pregnant body, in effect allowing her to appear as the secular equivalent of the virgin....because sexuality itself is occluded'.⁴ Barbara Hodgdon assesses *All's Well* in terms of substitute scenes and doubled presences which 'function to sexualize its narrative structure'.⁵ Helena's and Bertram's wedding is not seen but replaced by the exchange between Lafew and Parolles at the end of Act 2, scene 4 (56). The text elides the bed trick with noisy masks substituted for 'the promised silence of the sexual encounter' (59). According to Hodgdon, the play contains:

...a series of resonant doublings: Bertram/Parolles; Helena/Diana; Helena/Lavatch; Helena/Maudlin (a 'shadowed' doubling prompting Bertram's avowal of Helena's worth); Helena's double cures of the King and Bertram; the doubled rings; doubled 'deaths'; Bertram's 'double winning'. (64)

The play positions women, Hodgdon argues, 'either as virgins ready for marriage or as mothers. Implicitly and explicitly, the woman who acknowledges her own sexual desire becomes transformed into one or the other' (65). For Richard Wilson, the bed trick in *All's Well*, as orchestrated by Helena, 'gives surety that what can never be witnessed by men is legitimate'; by comparison, in *Measure for Measure*, 'the Duke's superintendence of Marina's conception (sic) allegorises a despotic coercion'.⁶ Carol Neely finds that *All's Well* 'dramatises fully all the strains in courtship and marriage that were potential or muted in the festive comedies'.⁷ She finds, in Helena, a 'blend of virtuous modesty and sexual energy, of self-confidence

³ The play can be read as the tale of a spirited young woman who refuses to be bound by restrictive gender-based social norms about the proper feminine role, who goes out into the world to seek her fortune independently and who, acting with the support of other women, maintains her purpose and finds a legitimate way to give effect to her sexual desire, despite apparently insuperable differences in rank. For an enthusiastic portrait of Helena's, 'old-world qualities of simplicity, sincerity and integrity...', see G. Wilson Knight, 'Helena', Kenneth Muir (ed.), *Shakespeare: The Comedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1965), 133-151.

⁴ *Suffocating Mothers*, 76-102, at 83.

⁵ 'The Making of Virgins and Mothers: Sexual Signs, Substitute Scenes and Doubled Presences in *All's Well That Ends Well*', *Philological Quarterly* 66 (1987), 47-71, at 64.

⁶ *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority* (London and New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 158-183, at 166.

⁷ *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 58-104, at 64. She notes 'the deliberate irresolution' of the end of the play, 'the tentative beginning' of Helena's pregnancy and the silent rewriting by Helena (or Shakespeare) of Bertram's requirement, so that instead of a child, she shows him a pregnancy (88-89).

and self-deprecation', revealed in 'the mixed nature of both her motives and her power' (68). The sympathetic co-operation between women is especially evident in Helena and Diana, but 'all the women also identify with each other, feeling sympathy and offering help where hostility and rivalry might have been expected' (74). Katharine Eisaman Maus, in the Introductory Note to *All's Well* in the Norton *Shakespeare*, describes Helena as an 'articulate, assertive, and sympathetic heroine', in the tradition of Portia and Beatrice: 'a kind of character virtually without precedent in the Western tradition' (2176). Helena is 'generally beloved by those around her, premaritally chaste but intensely sexual, tenacious in pursuit of the man she desires' (2176).

Scholars differ in their assessment of *All's Well* as a play dealing with the exercise of power in early modern society. Peter Erickson examines 'the cultural overlap between Bertram's situation and that of the Essex-Southampton group: in both cases an emphatically military definition of masculinity is placed under intense pressure and ultimately frustrated'.⁸ He concludes that there is 'no total, unimpeded, unqualified, cross-gender identification' with Helena, on the part of Shakespeare, who remains in part sympathetic to the 'besieged male positions of Bertram and the King' (73). In *Impersonations*, Orgel cautions against interpretations of early modern sexual relations, based on a simple division between men and women and the situation of Bertram provides him with an example. Although, as he points out, it was obviously better to be a man than a woman, young men, as well as young women, were subservient to the older generation:

Early Modern England was a patriarchal society....the crucial element is the restrictive father, elder brother, guardian, not the sex of the child....Bertram's marriage to Helena is no less constrained than the one proposed for Juliet to the County Paris. The problem is the father or the king or the structure of authority, not one's gender. (13-14)

Jonathan Hall examines *All's Well* through a study of the struggle between central power and the independent nobility, represented by 'blood', concluding that, when the King recognises Helena's virtue and orders Bertram to marry her this 'is not so much a claim for upward social mobility as for the central monarchy to recognize and bestow'.⁹ Lisa Jardine assesses Helena in terms of her 'specialist knowledge' and 'the power that knowledge gives her'.¹⁰ In her jokes with Paroles about virginity in

⁸ *Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Cal. and London: University of California Press, 1991), 57-73, at 57. Helena does not match the Queen's 'unnatural male aggressiveness', in striking Essex but her pursuit of Bertram is 'sufficiently forceful and relentless to constitute aggression' (60). *All's Well* 'thus hits a sensitive cultural nerve, and the open question announced in the title is less one of aesthetics than of sexual politics: can all end well if female power undercuts male heroism?' (60). Erickson goes on to argue that both the King and the system are represented as weak, and that even after Helena's cure he remains 'vulnerable, truculent and ineffectual' (67). His offer to Diana at the end of the play is a 'compulsive effort' on the King's part 'to redo the plot', to reassert control. Ironically what he suggests is so close to what Helena had first suggested that it stands as a testimony to her power, not to the King's.

⁹ *Anxious Pleasures: Shakespearean Comedy and the Nation State* (Cranbury, N. J., London and Mississauga, Ont.: Associated University Presses, 1995), 127-148, at 135. Some anxiety may still remain at the end of the play because there is no natural filiation to return to, Bertram and Helena having already being adopted into patriarchy and matriarchy respectively. 'All the rest is signs in the service of desire'. (148).

¹⁰ *Reading Shakespeare Historically* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 52-58, at 53. Jardine argues that Helena's knowledge is not innate but something she has 'achieved', that is learned from her

Act 1, scene 1, she reveals herself as too 'knowing' for the chaste virgin she pretends to be. By making public, in this way, the defining knowledge of women, which is intended to be 'private, domestic and sexual', she takes a small step towards 'the manipulation of her other "knowledge" to coerce Bertram unwillingly (and unwittingly) into marriage' (54). Jardine reads the second half of the play as the transformation of a sexually active woman into a virtuous ideal wife but it includes tensions which indicate unease in dealing with 'the two-faced learned lady', as 'both symbol of civilisation and social stability, and "impudent" (a sexually disruptive force for social disorder)' (58). 'In acting out the atonement of pilgrimage and the fairy-tale "restoration to favour" of the solving of the riddle (bed trick, ring game and all), Helena is made a kind of wish-fulfilment solution to the paradox...' (58).

Other scholars examine the provisional nature of the play's ending. Susan Snyder notes the multiple confusions in the title.¹¹ 'All's Well That Ends Well' may mean that a successful end makes up for what has to be endured to achieve it; or, more cynically, that 'the desirable end justifies the questionable means used to achieve it' (49). After his marriage to Helena, Bertram plans to: 'End ere I do begin' (2.5.25). When they find that they have missed the King, Helena encourages Diana and the Widow to continue:

All's well that ends well yet,
Though time seem so adverse, and means unfit.— (5.1.27-28)

The King's last words leave the end very much up in the air:

All yet seems well; and if it end so meet,
The bitter past, more welcome is the sweet. (5.3.329-330)

Each of the words in the title is capable of conflicting meanings. Snyder concludes that the play raises too many issues about imposed marriages, and marriage between couples of unequal rank, to allow for one ending to satisfy them 'all'. Great play is made of conflicting uses of 'well', even to the extent of 'well' meaning dead (2.4.1-11). With the King's offer to find a husband for Diana (5.3.323-324), the play appears to begin again even as it ends (Snyder, 49-52). Patricia Parker, who examines the emphasis in *All's Well* on multiplication, on inflation and deflation, and on 'raising up' and 'bringing down', argues that the end is 'still open to increase'.¹²

dead father, equivalent to borrowing or appropriating it. Because her apparent mastery over men is thus only temporary, it is less threatening (52). The tendency of the narrative is to argue against this public display of sexual knowledge: 'No good can come from woman's knowingness' (55). The tendency is also to degrade Helena's separate 'knowledge', in the manner in which a wise woman, skilled in healing, might be regarded as a witch (56). I noted in the Introduction that historical studies of women midwives and medical practitioners in England suggest that they were unlikely to be accused of witchcraft and that, if women healers experienced discrimination from the medical profession, it was not on gender grounds, but was an experience they shared with male practitioners, excluded because they lacked formal qualifications. Helena makes opportunistic use of the skills she has learned from her father, solely as a means of winning Bertram, and demonstrates no commitment to healing. The element of deception suggests that women healers are likely to be illegitimate.

¹¹ Introduction, *World's Classics All's Well*, 49-52.

¹² *Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 185-228, at 209. Parker notes resonances, for example, between Helena's discussion with Paroles about 'blowing up' virginity in Act 1, scene 1, the King's fistula, and the hollowness of Paroles, to which I will return later in the chapter.

I argue that, in terms of early modern medical knowledge, Helena's 'pregnant' appearance would have had an equivocal status, an uncertainty of being that, coupled with the provisionality of the title of the play and its ending, offers scope for an interesting interpretation of how pregnancy is acted by Helena. Not all early modern pregnancies were 'true' and in the context of a play which is packed with deceptions and misinterpretations, the meaning of Helena's 'pregnancy' cannot be taken for granted.

As with all the plays I discuss in this thesis, my interest in pregnancy in *All's Well* is as a condition represented in performance. I look first at the manner in which Helena's pregnancy can be judged as a stage in the process of early modern human reproduction, from courtship through to childbirth. Next I examine the acting of Helena's pregnancy as the last of a series of performances she gives during the play. At the end of the chapter, I assess the impact on my conclusions about pregnancy and theatre in *All's Well* of the playing of Helena by a boy.

"Twere all one/ That I should love a bright particular star"

Helena appears at the end of *All's Well*, claiming to be pregnant after a sexual encounter with Bertram. As discussed in the previous chapter, the prevailing belief about conception in the early seventeenth century was that it entailed a mutually satisfying sexual experience for both parties. After her night with Bertram, Helena comments:

But O, strange men,
That can such sweet use make of what they hate,
When saucy trusting of the cozened thoughts
Defiles the pitchy night; so lust doth play
With what it loathes, for that which is away. (4.4. 21-25)

Helena thinks that Bertram found the experience sexually satisfying and reflects on the nature of male sexuality. Bertram, in the dark, thinks Helena is Diana. His imagination is deceived so that, although he hates Helena, he uses her sweetly. Lust in men thus creates its own pleasure but this deceptive lust defiles even the night.¹³ The inference is that women, by comparison, could not be deceived in this manner. Helena's love for Bertram is a matter of physical desire and, in some ways, her pursuit of him is similar to Bertram's pursuit of Diana. One difference is that Helena wants marriage and Bertram does not. The other appears to be that while Bertram can be deceived by the darkness into taking an undesirable woman for the object of his desire, Helena would always know the difference between Bertram and any other man.

Sexual desire, in *All's Well*, is a compelling physical desire. As Lavatch says, he must marry:

My poor body, madam, requires it. I am driven on by the flesh, and
he must needs go that the devil drives. (1.3.24-25)

Yet in the case of both Bertram and Helena, more than strictly physical desire is at issue. Sexual attraction is interwoven with rank, as Lavatch finds: 'Our old lings and our Isbels o'th' country are nothing like your old ling and your Isbels o'th' court' (3.2.13-14).

¹³ See 4.4.21-25, marginal notes and fn. 2.

Helena treats Bertram, as Bertram treats Diana, as a trophy to be won. Helena expresses her desire in terms of Bertram's superiority and, as he is in no way superior except that he outranks her, it is difficult to distinguish her sexual attraction from an attraction to his rank. She says:

....'Twere all one
That I should love a bright particular star
And think to wed it, he is so above me.
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.
Th'ambition in my love thus plagues itself.
The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love. (1.1.80-87)

So powerfully does Helena stress Bertram's attractiveness as belonging to one whom she thinks of as above her that, without the difference in rank, it is difficult to imagine what she would experience as desirable. She stresses her 'ambition' (1.1.85). Bertram is above her as a star is above her, as the lion is above the 'hind', both a female deer and a servant. She speaks of his 'archèd brows, his hawking eye' (1.1.89), symbols of pride and elevation, and categorises her behaviour as 'idoltrous fancy' (1.1.92). But Helena's desire does not only involve overarching ambition. There is also an aspect of perversion involved in the coupling of two different species—the lion and the hind—which must result in the death of one of them: 'the hind that would be mated by the lion/ Must die for love'. Later, Helena perversely risks everything on winning Bertram, even that her life should end 'with vilest torture' (2.1. 173). As the King tells her: 'thy physic I will try,/ That ministers thine own death if I die' (2.1.184-185).

By comparison, Diana finds Bertram beautiful because of his gallantry. She maintains her own standards of behaviour:

'Tis a most gallant fellow.
I would he loved his wife. If he were honester
He were much goodlier. Is't not
A handsome gentleman? (3.5.76-79)

Neither Helena nor Bertram displays concern for the feelings of the desired object. For Bertram, winning Diana has very little to do with Diana herself and everything to do with how he hopes to increase his status as a man among men. He looks to physical gratification in his pursuit of Diana but her beauty is made more desirable by her position as a poor gentlewoman and because she has hitherto been unattainable. Diana is desirable as a trophy, specifically because she is not, as Bertram later alleges, 'a common gamester to the camp' (5.3.190). She is not someone whom he 'liked' and 'boarded...i'th' wanton way of youth' (5.3.212-213) but someone whom he believes it would be a triumph to gain. In addition to the publicity of his nightly performances, Bertram boasts about his attempts to his companions, although admitting that Diana has so far remained 'honest': 'Now will I lead you to the house and show you/ The lass I spoke of' (3.6.99-100). Bertram's callowness is demonstrated by the fact that he thinks the other men will regard his behaviour to Diana favourably. The Second Lord says to the First Lord that, by winning Diana, Bertram 'thinks himself made in the unchaste composition' (4.3.17-18).

There is a difference in Bertram's and Helena's objectives. He desires a one-night stand to be boasted about afterwards. She seeks total possession. But Helena's pursuit of Bertram exposes him to the same loss of honour to which his pursuit of Diana exposed her. Helena seems to have won him, subject to doubts about how the

play ends, but in her endeavours to win him, she destroys him, as he would have destroyed Diana by winning her. He can no longer be regarded as above her, partly through her elevation but more because of the lengths to which he has been driven by her efforts to achieve him. He has destroyed his honour in the mistaken belief that he will prove himself a man through his conquest of Diana and by his subsequent attempts to avoid censure but, at the end of the play, Helena makes sure that his reputation also is lost by exposing him publicly as a liar.

Lust, therefore, appears in *All's Well* as an overwhelming urge that causes people to act contrary to their better judgment and to ignore social norms and moral constraints. But it also appears as a condition that, while physical, can only be experienced in a social context, one in which rank, as well as gender, plays a major role. And satisfaction, at least for men, can be achieved without the presence of the object of desire, by the substitution of another person to perform the role.

'We blush that thou should's't choose; but be refused...'

The formation of the marriage between Helena and Bertram is problematic because it does not match the expected pattern of courtship. As discussed in the previous chapter, historians differ about the extent to which young people exercised any individual rights in the choice of marriage partners, with O'Hara placing more emphasis than Mendelson and Crawford on the role of family and friends.

Compared with courtship as described by Lawrence Stone, which focussed on the behaviour of the gentry and on men's activities, literature produced for young women, plebeian as well as aristocratic, gave more scope to female agency, 'fostering a romantic ideal which exaggerated female authority and control', during the only period in women's lives in which they were 'supposedly "on top" of the gender hierarchy' (Mendelson and Crawford, 110). The reality lay somewhere between. Courtship was itself a process, and a marriage was not established by 'an individualised exchange of verbal consent' but 'a complex series of formalities observed in varying degrees', including various public ceremonies and rituals of feasting and drinking 'which mirrored a whole sequence of privy promises' that preceded them (O'Hara, 64).

Richard Adair argues that the process of courtship among the middle and lower ranks was expected to be protracted.¹⁴ David Cressy describes the ritualised nature of courtship:

No formal ceremonial process guided the path of courtship. There was no ecclesiastical ritual to adhere to, no standard social script to obey. Yet all over England prospective partners observed the unwritten rules of a deeply patterned activity.¹⁵

It is generally accepted that, for upper class women, the process was likely to be less protracted and that their personal involvement would have been less. Elite women married younger, the courtship period was briefer, they spent less time alone with suitors, their parents and other kin were closely involved and much more emphasis was placed on economic matters (Mendelson and Crawford, 108). But while the

¹⁴ *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996, distributed in the U.S. and Canada by St Martin's Press), 135.

¹⁵ *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 234.

surrogate family of Bertram is involved in forming of the marriage between Helena and Bertram, she initiates the process, contrary to early modern expectations for a woman. Mendelson and Crawford argue that the initial approach in courtship always came from the man: 'Whatever their social rank, women were not supposed to take the initiative in the first stages of courtship' (116).¹⁶ Women preferred constancy in preference to passion. The man's role was to diligently woo and the woman's role was to 'scorn', repelling the man's advances by frowns and banter, while keeping him interested so that his sincerity and fidelity could be tested (116-117). Suitors thus took part in 'a ceremonial trial by ordeal' (117).

In discussing the use of go-betweens in marriage negotiations, O'Hara mentions some cases where people acting on behalf of women appear to have made the first approach to a man, or at least to have pursued a projected suit actively on the woman's behalf.¹⁷ But it was men who used intermediaries in most of the cases she mentions. O'Hara argues that male suitors would woo with 'divers tokens' or 'small trifles' (64), as Bertram has, using Paroles as a go-between (3.6.103-105).

The practice of giving was predominantly, although not exclusively, a male ritual....but women might also give in return. Nevertheless, the unevenness of the exchange assigned to women the primarily passive and more obligated role of recipient. Widows were found to be more forthcoming, but women usually acted in response to their suitors, either in returning tokens and, by implication, terminating negotiations, or in reciprocation, reassurance and positive encouragement. (O'Hara, 64-65)

O'Hara's conclusions about gifts suggest a slightly different role for women than that described by Mendelson and Crawford. In her account, while they did not initiate the courtship process, women would make their attitude to a future marriage clear. Rather than engaging in delaying tactics or scorning the suitor, they would either put an end to the suit or advance it.

What occurs in *All's Well* in forming the marriage of Helena and Bertram cannot be described as a courtship. To the extent that it could be, it defies early modern expectations. Helena makes her request for Bertram in public through a ritualised performance to which I will return later in this chapter. But this does not reflect a public mirroring of privy promises. Bertram does not know that such an offer is to be made. Far from wooing Helena with gifts, Bertram is treated by her as a gift, which must be examined and then passed over or retained as a woman would receive or reject a token. Helena also speaks of Bertram as something she has 'won': 'Will you be mine now you are doubly won?' (5.3.311). But if Helena's actions are treated as an attempt to 'woo' Bertram, in that she wants his love, not simply to be his wife, her 'courtship' of him has the protracted aspect typical of lower ranking couples. It can also be said to move through a range of public and private meetings and letters, except that the sequence is out of order. If the scene where Helena 'chooses' Bertram is seen as a public handfasting, it comes before the marriage but the wooing

¹⁶ Adair argues that '[w]omen were rather more restrained in the matter [of choosing a marriage partner] than men, but not impossibly so' (134), but this appears to refer more to the freedom, enjoyed by both women and men, to engage in the early stages of courtship without parental restraint than to the respective roles of women and men in initiating courtship (134-135).

¹⁷ See, for example, the reference to the widow Whiter, who sent a message 'If ever thowe wilt do for me, do for me now' (99).

comes later. The letter from Bertram is not to advance the marriage but to set Helena a condition that makes the marriage impossible. Helena adopts an active role, more suitable to a man, and Bertram acts like a woman. Instead of seeking a lover who will prove his constancy, Helena favours passion. And while her persistent attempts to win Bertram are typical of how a man was supposed to behave, she acts like a man who misreads the signs of 'scorn' with which Bertram treats her, interpreting them as part of the testing ritual rather than a genuine desire to avoid marriage to her at any costs. Bertram shows no interest in Helena when he is at his mother's house, except as a companion to his mother (1.1.70-71). He publicly humiliates her in Act 2, scene 3, by rejecting the King's offer of her as a bride. He refuses to kiss her (2.5.75-82). He runs away from her. In the letter he sends his mother (3.2.19-24), and the letter she receives from him (3.2.55-58), he makes it clear that he never wishes to consummate the marriage. Not only does Helena deny her feminine role in courtship, she does not exercise the judgment that a man would exercise in deciding when a courtship should be abandoned. In her pursuit of Bertram, Helena acts a subordinate role but, as discussed further below, she always acts contrary to what she says she will do

'In such a business give me leave to use the help of mine own eyes'

The marriage between Helena and Bertram is also suspect on legal and religious grounds, although it is performed in church and supported by all those in authority. Traditionally, the consent of both parties was regarded by the church authorities as 'alone necessary to make a marriage' and, Martin Ingram argues, this emphasis on consent was mainly to avoid enforced marriages for dynastic or financial reasons and that it was expected that a couple would marry with the consent of their families.¹⁸ The section on conditional contracts in Henry Swinburne's, *Treatise on Spousals*, uses 'if their parents shall consent' as an example of a contract *de futuro* (122-123). In 1597 and 1604, however, Convocation considered proposals to give greater weight to the family interests of a couple who sought to marry without the knowledge or consent of their 'governors'. A proposal was put to Convocation in 1597 to invalidate marriages made without parental consent, with appeals to ecclesiastical authorities if parents placed unreasonable pressures on their children. The proposal was rejected on the ground that the consent of the parties took precedence over 'credit of kindred, honour, wealth, contentment and pleasure of friends...' (Ingram, 135). In 1604, greater emphasis was given to the family in canons which prohibited marriage by a 'child' (anyone under the age of twenty-one), who had not obtained parental consent, and made parental consent a condition for the granting of licences for parties of any age. But a marriage that did not comply with these regulations was still treated as valid (Ingram, 135-136).

The decision of 1597 reaffirmed the need for both parties to consent and the changes in 1604 did not affect the traditional emphasis on consent as a means of avoiding enforced marriages. It appears that 'all social ranks paid at least lip service to the

¹⁸ *Church Courts*, 135. Dramatic recognition of the problems of enforced marriage appear in *Romeo and Juliet* (Norton Shakespeare, 865-941), where a secret marriage between a couple whose families would undoubtedly refuse consent is seen as the only solution to a proposal by Juliet's parents to force her to marry a groom of their choice. See also, George Wilkins, *Miseries of Inforced Marriage* (London, 1607; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1970, from an edition of 1613).

principle that the consent of the couple was necessary to marriage, [and] instances of blatant coercion were probably uncommon', but Ingram suggests that no doubt great pressure was placed on some individuals by their families (174). However suits for annulment of marriage were rare and traditionally the courts had placed a narrow interpretation on 'duress'. The case had to involve 'force' and 'fear' sufficient to sway a 'constant' man or woman.¹⁹ In *All's Well*, the notion of parents or friends is complicated, not by the extent of the kinship group but through the substitution of one parent for another.²⁰ Bertram is the son of the Countess whose position as the Count's widow makes her ruler in Roussillon during her son's minority. But, by law, Bertram is now the King's ward, and it is the King who controls decisions about Bertram's future, including decisions about marriage. As Bertram sees it: 'I am now in ward, evermore in subjection' (1.1.4-5).²¹ With her husband's death, the Countess thus experiences not simply the loss of her son's company at home, but her control over him. For the Countess, Bertram's departure is like his birth into the adult world and like another death for her: 'In delivering my son from me I bury a second husband' (1.1.1-2).²² The operation of a law that places nobles like Bertram, who have lost their father, under the King's control, indicates a lack of faith in the ability of noblewomen to make appropriate decisions about their sons' futures. The sense that Bertram's birth into the real world is premature in the eyes of the Countess is confirmed when she tells Lafeu: 'Tis an unseasoned courtier' (1.1.64).

As she loses a son, the Countess gains a 'daughter'. Maus argues that the same law that makes Bertram ward to the King, places Helena under the control of the Countess, because Helena also is a minor and the Countess is her feudal superior (2177). The Countess speaks to Helena as if she has 'adopted' her:

...I say I am your mother,
And put you in the catalogue of those
That were enwombèd mine. 'Tis often seen
Adoption strives with nature, and choice breeds
A native slip from foreign seeds.
You ne'er oppressed me with a mother's groan,
Yet I express to you a mother's care. (1.3.126-132)

The Countess thus appears to state that being Helena's mother is a matter of her choice rather than specific operation of law, so that her 'adoption' of Helena is a personal matter. Her words certainly state that the natural way to become a mother

¹⁹ Ingram, 174-175. For a study of consent and coercion in relation to marriage, see Margaret R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London and New York: Arnold, 1995; distributed in the USA by St Martin's Press), 174-186.

²⁰ All the older people in *All's Well* assume they can give advice to young people, demand information about their affairs and impose controls and constraints on their activities. Advice is handed out by neighbours (as in Mariana's advice to Diana, discussed above). Lafeu, shortly after he first meets Helena, joins with the Countess in admonishing her for excessive grief for her father (1.1.55-56). Paroles gives dangerous advice to Bertram and might also be said to 'advise' Helena about the proper way to lose her virginity.

²¹ See Maus, in the Introductory Note to *All's Well* in the *Norton Shakespeare*, 2175-2181, at 2177. Snyder discusses parallels between the King's disposal of Bertram in marriage and the practice of Elizabeth I and some of her courtiers to choose, 'for their own advantage marriage partners for wealthy minors in their charge' (12). She comments that, while there is no evidence that the King profits financially from Bertram's marriage, he may regard his actions as 'a way of paying his own debt' to Helena (12).

²² See G. K. Hunter, Arden *All's Well*, note to 1.1.1-2.

can be supplemented by an act of choice on the woman's part. The manner in which motherhood can be created apart from nature is an issue to which I will return later.

All's Well portrays a marriage to which one of the couple expresses the strongest objection:

My wife, my liege? I shall beseech your highness,
In such a business give me leave to use
The help of mine own eyes. (2.3.102-104)

Bertram rejects a proposal that he should marry someone whom he has not chosen and whom he does not love. Bertram is callow and is subsequently exposed as lacking in honour, and he could not be described as a 'constant' man, but his consent is clearly a matter of duress. His reasons against marrying Helena stress personal choice as the basis for marriage, with the King's rejoinders stressing the matters that Convocation had ranked lower than personal choice: 'credit of kindred, honour, wealth, contentment and pleasure of friends...'.

Bertram's first comment makes it clear that he is not attracted to Helena. His emphasis on using 'mine own eyes' suggests that he does not like the look of her. Physical attraction alone was not regarded as a sound basis for choosing a marriage partner but Bertram's position complies with the principle that he should not be compelled to marry against his will. Next, he rejects the argument that his service to the King includes the obligation to marry Helena. He does not think that the King should 'bring me down' to 'answer for your raising' (2.3.108-109). Bertram then makes a specific reference to Helena's low birth and rejects the King's statement that Helena's value is sourced in her deeds and that he can ennoble her: 'If thou canst like this creature as a maid,/ I can create the rest....I cannot love her, nor will strive to do't' (2.3.138-141). The King then denies outright the principle of personal choice: 'Thou wrong'st thyself. If thou should'st strive to choose—' (2.3.142); and there could hardly be greater 'force' or 'fear' than the King's words, which stress his own honour as pre-eminent:

My honour's at the stake, which to defeat
I must produce my power....
Check thy contempt;
Obey our will, which travails in thy good;
Believe not thy disdain, but presently
Do thine own fortunes that obedient right
Which both thy duty owes and our power claims,
Or I will throw thee from my care for ever
Into the staggers and the careless lapse
Of youth and ignorance, both my revenge and hate
Loosing upon thee in the name of justice,
Without all terms of pity. Speak. Thine answer. (2.3.145-162)

Bertram's capitulation is so clearly the result of coercion that it casts doubt on the appropriateness of the marriage, although in practice there seems little he could do to avoid it.

What view the Countess might have taken, if consulted about the marriage, is not clear. Her words can convey disapproval or sympathy, for example: 'Speak is't so?/ If it be so you have wound a goodly clew;' (1.3.165-166), might be acted to convey

total disapproval or a friendly recognition of the problems faced by Helena.²³ In my view, the 'leave and love' (1.3.238), the Countess accords to Helena on her trip to Paris is only on the understanding that Helena is not pursuing a 'presumptuous suit' (1.3.182). But when the Countess hears of the marriage, she seems not only to have suffered a change of heart but to have hoped for the outcome: 'It hath happened all as I would have had it, save that he comes not along with her' (3.2.1-2). A marriage between Bertram and the Helena who has cured the King and won his favour is now an attractive proposition. Her approval now coincides neatly with the King's exercise of power. In practice, the Countess was not consulted and the law operated to make her disapproval irrelevant, leading only to a clash of powers that would have been anomalous within a patriarchally structured society.

Whatever the legal niceties, Bertram has found he had no option but to participate in a ceremony of marriage and he speaks as if he were married:

Although before the solemn priest I have sworn,
I will not bed her
....O my Paroles, they have married me.
I'll to the Tuscan wars and never bed her. (2.3.253-257)

By law, once married, Bertram owes conjugal duty to Helena, as she hints when she asks for a kiss: 'Nor dare I say 'tis mine-and yet it is—/ But like a timorous thief most fain would steal/ What law does vouch mine own' (3.1.76-78). Bertram's solution is to avoid consummating the marriage. His letter to Helena reads as follows:

'When thou canst get the ring upon my finger, which never shall
come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father
to, then call me husband; but in such a "then", I write a "never".
(3.2.55-58)

Bertram, here, seeks to write a version of the future that cannot eventuate. He seeks to ensure by written conditions which he imposes unilaterally that an event will not take place. The conception of his child requires his participation and he will make sure that he does not participate. As Helena says: 'This is a dreadful sentence' (3.2.59). The practical effect of Bertram's letter is that he will only consummate the marriage once Helena has already borne his child, a contradiction in terms. In seeking to impose conditions on consummation, his letter seems unlikely to have any legal effect.²⁴ But by employing the bed trick to overcome the seeming

²³ When told by Reynaldo, her Steward, that he has heard Helena speak of her love for Bertram, the Countess says: 'Many likelihoods informed me of this before, which hung so tott'ring in the balance that I could neither believe nor misdoubt' (1.3.107-109). It is the Countess who first describes herself as 'mother' to Helena, in my view to test Helena's reactions. She next proposes that Helena might be her daughter-in-law and then recoils from the idea: 'God shield you mean it not!' (1.3.152). It would certainly be possible for the Countess to act her part so that she sounds more sympathetic. But the Countess has spoken of Helena to Lafew, in terms of what her education might gain for her, not as a prospective wife for anybody (1.1.34-40). The Countess questions Helena closely about her motives in going to Paris and, in my view, she believes that Helena is going to cure the King and no more. Possibly the Countess has left her options open, exercising the ambiguity which colours the communications of most characters in *All's Well*.

²⁴ The words of Bertram's letter imply that the marriage is simply a contract *de futuro*, some sort of agreement to be married in the future, after Helena has performed an impossible condition: 'By that "then", I mean a "never"'. The law rejected impossible conditions, for example 'If thou shalt touch the skies with thy finger' as 'void, or as if they were not at all mentioned', but although the condition is void, 'the contract qualified therewith is nevertheless reputed pure and simple' (Swinburne, 117-118). A marriage could be annulled if the husband was impotent or the wife frigid but, according to Ingram,

impossibility of her situation, Helena gives some legitimacy to the conditions he has set. A marriage forced on one of the participants, which is only consummated through trickery, might be classed as a very uncertain marriage indeed. But a seventeenth century source speaks of 'a virtuous deceit' when the Lady of the Earl of Oxford 'was brought to his bed under the notion of his *Mistress*'.²⁵

"When from my finger you can get this ring/ And are by me with child", et cetera. This is done'

In Act 5, scene 3, Bertram produces the ring which the King gave to Helena, when the King requires him to provide an 'amorous token' for Lafeu's daughter, Maudlin (5.3.69). Lafeu, the King and the Countess all recognise the ring as belonging to Helena but Bertram speaks what he wrongly believes to be truth: 'Hers it was not' (5.3.81) and 'The ring was never hers' (5.3.90). Next, he lies when he says he received it: '...from a casement thrown me,/ Wrapped in a paper that contained the name/ Of her that threw it' (5.3.94-96). He reverts to what he thinks is true, but is in fact false, when he says: 'She never saw it' (5.3.113) and also that:

If you shall prove
This ring was ever hers, you shall as easy
Prove that I husbanded her bed in Florence,
Where yet she never was. (5.3.125-128)

Diana falsely claims to have given the King's ring to Bertram in bed, when it appears that Helena must have done so: 'And this was it I gave him being abed' (5.3.231). She also implies, without saying so, that Bertram gave her the Roussillon family ring at the same time, when the audience knows he gave it to her in Act 4, scene 2 (4.2.52). When the King then asks Diana whether she threw the ring from a casement, she replies: 'I have spoke the truth' (5.3.233), a statement which is partly true, in that her answer denies Bertram's version, but which conceals her knowledge that Helena gave the ring to Bertram in bed. Like her subsequent statements, only some of which are true, Diana's answer is not conducive to revealing the truth about the ring or about the nature of her relationship with Bertram: 'Do you know he promised me marriage?' (5.3.254); 'It was not given me, nor I did not buy it' (5.3.269); 'It was not lent me neither' (5.3.270); 'I found it not' (5.3.271); 'I never gave it him' (5.3.273); 'It might be yours or hers for aught I know' (5.3.277); 'By Jove if I ever knew man, 'twas you' (5.3.284), to the King when he threatens to have her imprisoned.

To an audience already aware of the stratagem used to deceive Bertram, Diana's mixing of truth and falsehood provides a clear indication of how easy it is to mislead those who place too much reliance on words without being aware of the context in which they are spoken. Her equivocation in this scene is echoed in Paroles's interjections about 'love' in the relationship between young men of rank and the lower-ranking women that they court: 'Faith, sir, he did love her, but how?'

the law involved a long period of cohabitation and medical examinations of the parties and he found no cases recorded where such a suit was brought (173). A deserted wife or husband could sue for restitution of conjugal rights, although Ingram notes that the cases in which this suit was brought were usually linked to allegations of adultery or cruelty so that they appear in the records as part of a process aimed at separation and such suits were rare.

²⁵ Francis Osborne, *Memoirs*, 1658 edition, quoted in Arden *All's Well*, xliv.

(5.3.245); 'He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves a woman' (5.3.247); 'He loved her, sir, and loved her not' (5.3.249).

Diana's equivocal and confusing remarks appear to be aimed at mystifying the King and the court, to enhance the effect of Helena's ultimate appearance but the scene also serves to expose Bertram's dishonesty, to 'bring him low'. In Shakespeare's source, the Countess arrives at the court with twin sons and produces them and the ring immediately: 'The Counte hearing this, was greatly astonned, and knewe the Ryng, and the children also, they were so lyke hym'.²⁶ Further, the Countess, when the Count asked: 'howe is this come to passe?...rehersted unto them in order all that, which had bene done, and the whole discourse thereof' (152). Helena adopts the most complex route to revealing the truth, a route that exposes Bertram before his mother and the court, so that he is totally deflated.

Helena's substitution of a pregnancy for a living child draws attention to the mysterious manner in which she claims to have achieved conception, in circumstances which must be explained in more detail to the satisfaction of Bertram and the King. Bertram still imposes a condition on his love:

If she, my liege, can make me know this clearly
I'll love her dearly, ever ever dearly. (5.3.312-313)

For the King, also, more needs to be explained:

Let us from point to point this story know
To make the even truth in pleasure flow. (5.3.321-322)²⁷

As discussed by Snyder, Parker and other scholars, the phrase: 'All's Well That Ends Well' is ambiguous, providing scope for multiple meanings, including the possibility that the end that is 'well' involves death. Diana's words: 'one that's dead is quick' (5.3.300), have similarly ambiguous implications. The King's question: 'Is there no exorcist/ Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?/ Is't real that I see?' (5.3.301-303), might refer as much to the fact that Helena is not 'dead' as to the fact that she is 'quick,' that is, 'with child'. Helena confirms that 'quick' means alive when she responds to the King's query: 'No, my good lord:/ 'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see;/ The name and not the thing' (5.3.303-304). 'Shadow' means 'ghost', and she has allowed most other characters to believe that she is dead. It also means 'imitation', perhaps implying that, until Bertram accepts her as his wife, she is no more than a woman he slept with, thinking she was someone else.²⁸ That is, she will not be truly alive until Bertram recognises her as his wife, which he immediately does: 'Both, both. O, pardon!' (5.3.305)

²⁶ 'Giletta of Narbona', The Thirty-Fourth Novel of William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure*, Vol. I, (1575), a translation by Painter of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (Day 3, Story 9), reproduced in the Appendix to the Arden *All's Well That Ends Well*, 145-152, at 152.

²⁷ The King's promise (or threat) to Diana of a husband, is also conditional on her being yet 'a fresh uncropped flower' (5.3.323). His guess that Diana 'kept's a wife herself, thyself a maid' (5.3.324), does suggest that he already understands how Helena has become pregnant and removes one aspect of provisionality from the end of the play.

²⁸ See Arden *All's Well*, V.iii.301, fn..

One possible interpretation relates to Helena's pregnancy. She confirms that 'quick' also means 'with child', when she says:

...There is your ring.
And, look you, here's your letter. This it says:
'When from my finger you can get this ring,
And are by me with child,' et. cetera. This is done;
Will you be mine now you are doubly won? (5.3.307-311)²⁹

Helena is named by Diana as 'quick', and she herself says 'This is done', thus 'naming' herself, as 'with child'. Bertram has set the challenge to Helena to 'get the ring upon my finger, which never shall come off, and show me a child begotten of thy body that I am father to' (3.2.55-58). Helena has redrafted his letter without comment. She cannot show him a child so she substitutes words of her own and she shows him herself, with the words: 'This is done'. In the context of early modern pregnancy and childbirth, Helena's assumption that a pregnancy is equivalent to a child is worthy of comment. 'In such a "then", I write a "never"' had a very powerful meaning. Audience members at *All's Well* would have been aware of all the reasons why Helena might wish to alter Bertram's conditions rather than following them to the letter, and thus present her pregnancy, as opposed to waiting for the birth of a child. If she did what he proposed, not only must there be a live child to show him but she also must be alive to show it to him. The rate of miscarriages and still births was high and all women feared for themselves and their children during pregnancy.³⁰

Helena's behaviour is contrary to that prescribed for a pregnant woman. Her travels have led her from Florence, where the child was conceived, to Marseilles and then to Roussillon. At Marseilles, where they find the King has already left, Helena comments on the 'exceeding posting day and night' (5.1.1). 'I say exercise is very dangerous' writes Madame Bourgeois in her Instructions to her daughter, attacking what she describes as 'a common error among Midwives...that a woman with child when she hath gone seven months of her time, is to walk much; upon a conceit that exercise is very proper for her' (8). 'They must be forbid riding in Waggins or Coaches, especially in the three first months' (Guillemeau, 22). These limits expressed in the pregnancy manuals on a pregnant woman's physical activity suggest that well before she was confined, an early modern pregnant woman could expect her life to be curtailed. Cressy notes examples of women who, wishing to deliver their children in their parents' home, travelled late in their pregnancies. Isabella Twysden rode home to Kent in 1645, with no ill effects (54). However, the dangers were known and understood. Helena regards the performance of her pregnancy before the King as so imperative that she is prepared to endanger its outcome. Audience members at a performance of *All's Well* in the early seventeenth century would have been aware that her behaviour might endanger the possibility of a safe birth and possibly expose her to death.

²⁹ Many critics do not comment on the discrepancy, but see Neely, 88.

³⁰ It has been suggested that women's fears for themselves were out of proportion to the number of maternal deaths attributable to childbirth, accounting for no more than a 6 or 7% chance over a woman's whole procreative career, but instances of maternal deaths were sufficiently common to make all women anxious that they would not survive the ordeal. See Laurence, *Women in England*, 77-78; and Mendelson and Crawford, 152-153. Husbands also feared the death of their wives. See Ralph Houlbrooke, *English Family Life, 1576-1716: An Anthology from Diaries* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 101-132, esp. 108-110.

Helena's apparent lack of concern about the outcome of her pregnancy and her decision to alter the terms of Bertram's condition could, therefore, to an early modern audience, be explained by the same fact. She is not certain that she can, in the future, present him with a living child, as discussed further in the following sections.

'Is't real that I see?'

In terms of the early modern understanding of pregnancy, the words 'one that's dead is quick', also take on greater complexity. Reversed, they would mean that what is 'quick', the foetus, is also 'dead', because whatever it is that Helena bears cannot come to fruition. The signs of early modern pregnancy were notoriously confusing. While a pregnant appearance was understood through the sign of a swollen belly, a swollen belly did not always signify a true pregnancy.

In *Child-birth*, the first thing Guillemeau finds worthy of note is the potential for professional humiliation through mistaking a false pregnancy for a true one. He began the first chapter of his First Book with this caution to other practitioners, which stressed the dangers of relying only on visual signs:

A Chirurgion must bee very circumspect, in determining whether a woman be conceiued, or no; because many haue preiudiced their knowledge, and discretion, by iudging rashly hereof. For there is nothing more ridiculous, then to assure a woman that shee is with childe; and afterward, that her naturall sicknesse, or store of water should come from her: and instead of a childe, some windie matter should breake from her, and so her belly fall, and grow flat againe: which hath hapned vnto many men, that haue beene well esteemed, both for their learning, and experience. (2)

To a lay person, or a practitioner less cautious than Guillemeau, Helena might well have looked pregnant but there was the danger that her belly was swollen up with something windy which might break forth, leaving it flat again. Parker links the wordy, windy Paroles with the King's fistula, the running sore that drips water (195). She contrasts both with Helena, 'the pregnant or fruitfully dilated Helen of *All's Well*' (225), her pregnancy 'a sign of marriage in deed as well as word' (203). But, I suggest, Helena's swollen belly may be as hollow as Paroles and his drum, a thing she beats as part of her obsessive claims, containing only some 'windie matter'. In *The Compleat Midwives Practice*, it is said of a windy mole that, 'if it be struck on, it sounds like a drum' (86). Bertram may have acquired himself two companions whose desire and ambitions have caused them to swell and, if it is possible for Bertram to be brought lower than he already has been, this might occur if he found out that he had finally accepted Helena as a wife on the basis of a pregnancy that was no more than wind. If so, he, the King and the other spectators will appear as foolish as a medical practitioner who made a false diagnosis.

A collection of wind that causes the belly to distend like a pregnancy was known as a 'false mole'. The medical texts distinguished between a range of false pregnancies:

Some haue a false conception, which is as it were the beginning of Mola. Others haue the Mola it selfe, which we commonly call the Moone-calfe. (Guillemeau, 13)

A false conception involved a lump of flesh, expelled after a few months, whereas a mole could continue for years, sometimes as long as the woman lived. The true mole was a hard, firm, shapeless mass within the womb, part of the generative process, possibly bred when the man's seed was weak (14). Bertram has been presented as weak and womanlike, implying that his seed may be weak, so that any pregnancy

resulting from a union with him might be no more than a mola. False moles, sometimes unrelated to generation, sometimes accompanying it, were windy, watery or a collection of many humours within the womb (13-14). The molas and other false pregnancies described by the medical practitioners did not result in a living creature but 'Moon-calf' had the alternative meanings of 'a misshapen birth' and 'a congenital idiot; a born fool'.³¹ Helena has already anticipated the potentially monstrous outcome of any union she might have with Bertram, when she refers to the union of the lion and the hind in Act 1, scene 1.

Early modern texts emphasised that conception could only occur through the participation of two people with different genitals. But it was also thought that, on some occasions, the minds of women operated creatively to conceive within themselves. Helkiah Croke, in *Mikrocosmographia*, denied that such a conception was possible, on the basis that Galen had disproved it (298). But he left some scope for doubt:

Although a woman has in herself the efficient and materiall causes of generation, yet cannot she generate in herself without the help of a man; I speak of a lawful generation, because her seed is but weak and too cold. (286)

The popular *Aristotle's Master-Piece* described an imaginative conception by a lustful woman:

And some are of opinion that this Conception, may be made without the help of a Man, by force of imagination, in those that are extreamly Lascivious; for that by often seeing and touching their Husbands, at the same time strongly fancying themselves in the Act, their Seed flows to the Blood, and is by the Heat of the Womb formed into a foul Mass, but arrives at no perfection. (46)

In terms of popular early modern medical knowledge, Helena, having spent a night with Bertram, might have used her imagination to create a false pregnancy. But, if so, the implication is that it might devour her, like the process of self-generation and self-consumption in virgins, described by Paroles: 'Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese; consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies with feeding his own stomach' (1.1.132-134).

Said of a supposedly pregnant early modern woman's body, the King's words: 'Is't real that I see?', can thus have a variety of meanings. They may express surprise at the life of a woman, thought to be dead, and soon to give birth. But the uncertainty attached to early modern pregnancy raises the possibility of a variety of pregnancies that are less and less 'real': a false mole, a real mole or a pregnancy that authorities like Croke claimed could not occur 'lawfully', but which were mentioned in more popular works as possibly true, in women who are 'extreamly Lascivious'. The provisional ending of the play rules out none of these options.

³¹ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol II., 1352. 'Moon-calf', Sense 1: 'An abortive shapeless fleshy mass in the womb; a false conception (regarded as produced by the influence of the moon) - 1658; Sense 1b: 'A misshapen birth ...1610'; Sense 1c: 'A congenital idiot, a born fool 1620'. Sense 2: 'a mooning absent-minded person 1613'.

'Mine eyes smell onions. I shall weep anon'

In the last moments of Act 5, scene 3, Helena appears on stage so that her body can provide the meaning to equivocal words spoken by Diana. She acts her pregnancy for the King, Bertram, Lafeu, the Countess and the rest of the court. By her absence at various stages, the circulation of a rumour that she is dead and her adoption of disguises, Helena has previously performed her death. Now she presents herself as alive and with child. The emphasis by Diana on her appearance: 'And now behold the meaning', allows her to use different words to those Bertram has written in his letter and thus substitute herself for the child but also invites the audience to observe her woman's body as a pregnant woman's body as they listen to comments about whether those on stage should or should not believe their eyes.

Helena gives a series of performances throughout the play: grieving daughter, dispirited lover of a man above her station, earnest healer of the King, young woman engaged in choosing a husband, passionate lover at a secret encounter, and pilgrim. Her performances are deceptive, but they cover a range of lies, evasions and half-truths and she may even deceive herself on occasions. With men, Helena often presents herself as deferential and prepared to abandon whatever she proposes but her love for Bertram fuels her determination to persevere. On each occasion, her performance is opaque, in that her words and demeanour convey one meaning to the on-stage audience, and the truth is revealed to them through her subsequent actions. Her performances are pregnant with a meaning that will be delivered later.

Helena's first performance is of grief and she weeps dramatically. She makes clear, by her first words, that her grief is part genuine and part assumed, given that she does grieve but not for the reasons attributed to her: 'I do affect a sorrow indeed, but I have it too' (1.1.47). The Lafeu praises her tears: 'Your commendations, Madam get from her tears' (1.1.43) and the Countess replies: 'Tis the best brine a maiden can season her praise in' (1.1.42-43). Both interpret them as a sign of grief for her father but also suggest that her performance casts doubt on her grief: 'Go to, no more, lest it be rather thought you affect a sorrow than to have—' (1.1.45-46). Later the Countess understands Helena's true motivation: 'Now I see/ The myst'ry of your loneliness, and find/ Your salt tears head' (1.3.154-156).

Helena's first soliloquy (her 'bright particular star' speech), with its stress on the 'hopelessness' of her love for Bertram, is also a performance, of which she is the only spectator. Possibly, her real intent is an undercurrent to her spoken words throughout but, I suggest, she starts in a genuine belief that Bertram is too far above her for any chance of success and, through her imagination, she then breeds the possibility of succeeding. Her continuing desire becomes apparent when she and Paroles discuss the nature of virginity and she imagines how her relationship with Bertram would cover all categories of lover: mother, mistress, friend, phoenix, captain, enemy, guide, goddess, sovereign, counsellor, traitress, dear (1.1.153-157). Paroles can hear her words, but they have the effect of a soliloquy because he does not know of her love for Bertram. As he leaves, Helena describes the process of recognising her intention to secure Bertram:

Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie
 Which we ascribe to heaven....
 What power is it that mounts my love so high,
 That makes me see and cannot feed mine eye?
 The mightiest space in fortune nature brings
 To join like likes, and kiss like native things.
 Impossible be strange attempts to those
 That weigh their pains in sense and do suppose
 What hath been cannot be. Who ever strove
 To show her merit that did miss her love? (1.1.199-210)

She identifies the creative role of imagination when she says that she must find the strength within herself rather than in Heaven. Her love lets her imagine a union with Bertram, one in which she fills multiple roles, but she still feels herself unable to 'feed mine eye'.³² Then she recognises that 'sense' is preventing her from recalling former examples where lovers came together across a great space. In performing herself in multiple roles in relation to Bertram, Helena has thus acted, not as a virgin, but as a mother whose imagination creates a future world in which she and Bertram are linked in such various ways. By the end of Act 1, scene 1, she has decided to follow Bertram:

...The King's disease—my project may deceive me,
 But my intents are fixed and will not leave me. (1.1.211-212)

I suggest that Helena's attitude is transformed from hopelessness to hope because she cannot truthfully continue to act the hopeless role she started with. Her performance of hopelessness is a failure and it generates her intention to follow Bertram to Paris. Helena is not concerned that she must act truthfully to the world, only to herself, so she is able to continue with false performances throughout the play.

With this motivation firmly fixed in her mind and that of the audience, Helena acts for the Countess her version of why she must go to Paris, again allowing true words to conceal her motives. The Countess asks: 'This was your motive for Paris, was it?' (1.3.216), and Helena truthfully admits that Bertram 'made me to think of this/ Else Paris, and the medicine and the King/ Had from the conversation of my thoughts/ Haply been absent then' (1.3.218-221). Helena deceives the Countess by omitting to describe her true intentions at the time she speaks, thus leaving the Countess apparently happy in the belief that Helena will not aim for Bertram's love.

At the court, Helena acts 'Doctor She', with deferential persistence. When the King initially rejects her help, she says: 'My duty then shall pay me for my pains/ I will no more enforce mine office on you' (2.1.123-124); but persists: 'What I can do can do no hurt to try' (2.1.132).³³ Given her earlier recognition that help will come from within herself, there is an element of deception when she invokes God's authority for her skills: 'He that of greatest works is finisher/ Oft does them by the weakest minister' (2.1.134-135); 'But most it is presumption in us when/ The help of heaven

³² Hunter suggests that this is a hawking image, the hawk having spotted the prey but holding back from pursuit, Arden *All's Well*, 1.1.217, fn.

³³ The *Norton Shakespeare* includes a stage direction: 'Enter Helena [*disguised*]' which does not appear in the First Folio. Scholars have discussed the apparent failure of Lafeu to recognise Helena as the young woman he met at Roussillon. When talking to the King, Helena does not disguise her relationship to her father, nor that the remedy she suggests is one she received from him (2.1.98-100 and 2.1.101-112).

we count the act of men' (2.1.150-151). She herself proposes that if she is unsuccessful she will not only lose her good name but that her life will end (2.1.169-173), which enables her to ask the King for a reward if she succeeds (2.1.192-193).

In Act 2, scene 3, before Helena 'chooses' the man she will accept as a reward from the King for curing him, she comments that she is a 'simple maid and that she has 'done already', that her 'blushes' tell her: "'We blush that thou shouldst choose; but, be refused/ Let the white death sit on they cheek for ever,/ We'll ne'er come there again'" (2.3.67-69). The King's response: 'Make choice and see./ Who shuns thy love shuns all his love in me' (2.3.69-70), makes it clear that he will uphold her choice. She then goes through a theatrical ritual in which she approaches young men, only to tell them clearly that she does not want them. Lafeu, who can see the action but not hear what is said, interprets what occurs differently: 'Do they all deny her?... (2.3.82); These boys are boys of ice...' (2.3.89). The implication is that the young men cannot reject her but that their demeanour indicates a lack of enthusiasm, so that body language is as important as words in conveying theatrical meaning. The audience knows that her performance is false, as she has already decided which man she will choose. Having already checked with the King, she can be sure that he is unlikely to accept her offer to give up Bertram and depart: 'That you are well restored, my lord, I'm glad./ Let the rest go' (2.3.143-144).

In Act 3, scene 5, the Widow identifies her as disguised as a pilgrim (3.5.27) and only later does Helena identify herself as Bertram's wife. In her role as an amorous woman, willing to sacrifice her honour to lie with Bertram, Helena puts on a different form of disguise, darkness and silence. In the final scene, it is also suggested that she puts on the costume she wore at the beginning of the play, tears. She says to the Countess, who does not speak: 'O my dear mother, do I see you living' (5.3.316)? Lafeu, who has seen her tears at the outset as a sign of grief for the loss of her father, now comments: 'Mine eyes smell onions. I shall weep anon' (5.3.317), a reminder that, in the theatre, tears are most likely to be generated by onions and are, in that sense prosthetic, rather than coming from the heart. There are also references in the Epilogue to the adoption by actors of different *persona*. The audience is reminded that what appears on stage is not true but a theatrical representation and that once the play is over, when 'All is well ended if this suit be won' (2), the characters cease and the players revert to their true beings: 'The King's a beggar, now the play is done' (1).

Helena's pregnancy, her final performance in the play, is as opaque as the earlier ones. Even if it is a genuine pregnancy, normally conceived when she was with Bertram, and one in which she believes, she acts it to get the full theatrical benefit by presenting herself as meeting the terms of Bertram's letter. She may not survive the birth or bear a live child. The pregnancy may be false, a mole or a monster, or achieved without the assistance of man. Or it might be wholly false, a matter of performance only. Unlike her other performances, the meaning of which is made clear by what occurred later on, this performance must remain opaque and whatever it is Helena bears—Bertram's child, windy mole, monster or a prosthetic cushion—must remain pregnant with a meaning that cannot be delivered.

All's Well thus presents a complex situation in which the desire of a woman to gain the man she loves involves trickery and deceit. Her marriage above her rank, although sanctioned by authority, was not achieved through a normal courtship process and Bertram married her under duress. She presents herself as having

achieved the impossible condition Bertram set her to consummate the marriage. But early modern medical discourses suggest a range of alternatives to a true pregnancy and there is also the possibility that her pregnancy is solely a matter of performance. In her discussion with Paroles she has named herself as the mother of Bertram, just as the Countess, when she quizzes Helena about her feelings for Bertram, names herself as Helena's mother. Here, through her statement: 'This is done', Helena claims to be on the way to being a mother. The question is whether she has now adopted the role of mother to the supposed child of Bertram, as yet unborn. Given the lengths to which Helena has been prepared to go to win Bertram's love, and her use of theatre at all stages, pregnancy may be no more than another guise she has adopted. *All's Well* plays with shades of truth and falsity, and is noted for the provisionality of its ending. A provisional pregnancy adds a range of further options to obscure the ending even further.

The pregnant boy in *All's Well That Ends Well*

The fact that Helena was played by a boy reduces the range of believable options at the end of the play. In *Measure for Measure*, where the issue is how to classify Juliet's pregnancy in legal and moral terms, the boy playing her adds further to the indeterminacy which permeates the play. The problem with pregnancy in *All's Well* is how far Helena's pregnancy can be accepted as true. She uses it in a highly theatrical manner, she has a history of acting in performances which are not strictly truthful and there are suggestions, based on early modern medical texts, that the pregnancy might not be natural. The boy actor who played Helena could not have conceived a child and if the audience had cause to notice him, belief in the truthfulness of her pregnancy would thus have been reduced. The end would still have been provisional because the audience would never know the outcome. But the recognition that Helena was performed by a boy would have reinforced any suspicion that her pregnancy is unnatural, or wholly acted.

As the pregnant Helena is only on stage at the end of the play, for the briefest appearance, there is very little scope for oscillation between her pregnancy and the boy actor. But there are several earlier references that would have been likely to draw the attention of the audience, at an early performance, to Helena's sexuality and sexual activity, either prospective or actual, with the possible implication that if she conceived a child it was likely to be monstrous. These references were also likely to remind them of the boy who played her. She speaks of a potential union with Bertram as a form of miscegenation: 'The hind that would be mated by the lion/ Must die for love' (1.1.86-87). An early modern audience was required to think of her coupling with Bertram as a physical activity, casting doubt from the outset on the nature of any child she might bear and linking any such mating with death. Awareness of the boy actor could only have strengthened such implications. Paroles's jokes about her losing her virginity are, first, a reminder that a woman loses her virginity differently to a man, whether his is lost in sexual activity with a woman or with another man. Where the virgin was also recognised to be a boy, 'blowing up' virginity would have had quite different implications.

Lafeu, who describes himself as a pander (2.1.95-96), describes Helena to the King as a sexual tonic: 'a medicine/ That's able to breathe life into a stone/ Quicken a rock, and make you dance canary/ With sprightly fire and motion' (2.1.70-73). He links the healer, and the medicine she will give the King, with renewed sexual energy on the King's part. Helena is 'powerful to arise King Pepin, nay,/ To give great

Charelemagne a pen's hand/ And write to her a love-line' (2.1.70-76). The living stone conjures up the rigid penis the King will soon enjoy but Lafeu's words would also have reminded an early modern audience that, although the vessels in which women stored seed were called stones, the boy playing 'Dr She' had 'stones' of a much more noticeable kind, and other male genitals. 'Stones' were also associated with false conceptions. Sharp refers to a case of a 'woman that had a Child in her womb, that did not corrupt nor stink though it lay long dead there untill it was turned into a stone' (110). She argues against this occurrence, noting that it is the only one of its kind she has ever heard described, and also that, without some 'petrifying humour' the foetus could not turn into a stone.³⁴ But she retains the idea of the false conception as a stone when she describes a test to distinguish true and false pregnancies:

It is very hard to know a false conception from a true until four moneths be past and then the motion of the body of the thing conceived will shew it; for if it be a living Child, that moves quick and lively; but the false conception falls from one side to another like a stone as the woman turns herself in her bed....(109-110).

Helena soliloquises about the difference between sexual enjoyment in men and women thus drawing attention to herself as a woman and inviting speculation about the nature of the 'sweet use' Bertram has made of her. She classes the process whereby she conceived, as defilement: 'When saucy trusting of the cozened thoughts/ Defiles the pitchy night' (4.4.23-24). Further, Bertram makes what he thinks of as a vital distinction between Helena and Diana but he is unable to tell the difference between them. In Helena's opinion this is 'strange'. In an early performance, the effect of Helena's words would have been to draw attention to the boys playing Helena and Diana who not only differed from each other but each of whom was different to a woman. By implication, men in the theatre were also 'strange' to accept boys for women. Any child Helena bears can only be 'strange'.

I suggest that, on each of these occasions, the attention of the audience would have been drawn briefly to the boy actor playing Helena and that the references would have contributed to a cumulative tension between the actor and the role. Helena, in the final scene, distinguished between a wife in name and a real wife: 'Tis but the shadow of a wife you see,/ The name and not the thing' (5.3.304-305). She attempts to name herself as a mother by treating pregnancy as equal to a child: 'This is done'. For there to be a mother, there must be a child, which is exactly what a boy Helena cannot produce. When Bertram says: 'If she my liege can make me know this clearly....' (5.1.315-316), it would have been clear to the early modern audience that this was exactly what Helena, played by a boy, could never do. Only a woman could play a real mother or act a true pregnancy. But a pregnant outline might cast a pregnant shadow over Bertram.

Helena thus uses pregnancy in an attempt to validate her situation, as a wife in name only. The play ends provisionally and, judged by early modern expectations about conception and birth, her pregnancy itself is provisional. It is also enacted and, as a theatrical event, it is based on deception because Helena has redrafted the terms of

³⁴ 'It is no great wonder why it did not stink nor corrupt in the womb, for many aged women live many years with a Mole in the body, yet it never stinks nor corrupts though they keep it in them till they dye' (110-111). Sharp's account of the stone baby came from 'Two famous Physician of *Senon*' (110).

Bertram's bargain and thus claims that all she needs to show him is a pregnancy. Based on her earlier performances, the meaning will be delivered later and is likely to be different to some degree from what she appears to state. At the dramatic level, this meaning must remain provisional. But metatheatrically, the boy actor points towards a pregnancy that is false to some extent. The Epilogue invites the audience, once the show is done, and the King becomes a beggar, to think of Helena, as a boy who removes his costume and turns out to be pregnant with deception.

Chapter Three

Pregnancy as a State of Mind: *The Winter's Tale*

In *Measure for Measure*, pregnancy is proof of sexual transgression in a young couple whose marital status is irregular. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena presents herself 'with child', as proof that her marriage has been consummated. In *The Winter's Tale*, paternity becomes the most important issue for Hermione's pregnancy, although only Leontes doubts that he is the father of the child she bears.¹

Scholars have reached diverse conclusions about the role of Hermione and the end of the play. Carol Neely and Alicia Anna Boutilier assess it positively.² Janet Adelman describes it as 'an astonishing psychic achievement'.³ *The Winter's Tale* restores the mother to life and makes the father's generativity and authority contingent on her return', albeit in a patriarchal framework (236). Jonathan Hall sees Hermione as redemptive but points out that what she rescues is patriarchy.⁴ Valerie Traub argues that Hermione can only resume her marriage with Leontes when her 'unmanageable' sexuality can be 'metaphorically contained and psychically disarmed'; and her 'death is reversed only when another symbolic form of stasis and control is imposed'.⁵ Lisa Jardine describes Hermione's 'saint-falsely-accused's silence...'⁶ Like Hero, Hermione is 'most grand when most wronged' and the qualities which make up her female heroism are disturbing because they 'negate the possibility of heroism in the male...' (193). Gail Kern Paster sees *The Winter's Tale* as a play in which 'the structure of action follows often discontinuous episodes in the familial narrative of parents and children'.⁷

¹ *The Winter's Tale* was written c. 1611, but not published until the First Folio in 1623. Quotations are from the *Norton Shakespeare*, 2873-2953. The play was performed by the King's Men on 15 May, 1611, at the Globe Theatre; at court on 5 November, 1611, probably at the Banqueting House; between December and February 1612-1613, as part of festivities before the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Frederick, the Elector Palatine; at court on 7 April, 1618; possibly at court during 1619; at court on 18 January, 1624, and at court on 16 January, 1634. See Stephen Orgel (ed. and intro.), *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996; published as a World's Classics paperback 1996), 79-80. Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 367, 372, 388, 390.

² For example, Neely finds:

The reunions and marriages in *The Winter's Tale* work symbolically, dramatically, and psychologically because the women who are crucial to them are accepted into the play as fully human figures 'freed and enfranchised'...from the rigid conceptions and imprisoning roles projected onto them by foolish men. (*Broken Nuptials*, 209)

Neely's conclusions are echoed by Boutilier, who finds that Leontes has to overcome his obsession with patrilineage and learn to trust the words of women before he can embrace his wife again, so that questions of legitimacy are decided by women. See '*The Surer Side*', 94-99, at 98.

³ *Suffocating Mothers*, 219-238, at 235.

⁴ *Anxious Pleasures*, 116.

⁵ *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of sexuality in Shakespearean drama*, 45. Traub refers to Dollimore's argument that a statue is a sign of respect which is inseparable from the subject's obsolescence, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in cultural materialism*, 147. Traub argues that Hermione can be respected because she is obsolete: 'To the extent that a statue's function is commemorative, Hermione-as-statue safely re-members, but does not em-body, the threat of female erotic power' (45-46).

⁶ *Still Harping*, 169-198, at 189.

⁷ *The Body Embarrassed*, 164. See, 215-280, esp. 260-280. Paster assesses romance plots in terms of childhood deprivation, due to the practice of wet-nursing: 'Thus, the loss and magical return of

Footnote(s) continued on following page(s)

Scholars have also noted what Graham Holderness calls 'the play's reflections on its own medium' and 'its implications...for the relationship between *The Winter's Tale* and Jacobean "court theatre"'.⁸ He concludes that *The Winter's Tale* declares the need for 'a theatrical language other than that of the court itself' through a depiction of 'the conventions of court theatre...incorporated, interpolated into the dramatic medium of this product of the popular theatre...only to be estranged, framed into critical visibility and self-reflexive interrogation' (235). To Lynn Enterline, *The Winter's Tale* is 'a play much noted for interrogating "the myriad forces of human narration"' which 'traces a complex, fascinated, and uneasy relation to female speech'.⁹

Many scholars have focussed on pregnancy in *The Winter's Tale* as extending beyond the impetus for the action to provide a metaphor by which it can be interpreted. Elizabeth Sacks finds that Shakespeare combines 'human continuity' and 'imperishable literary achievement...in the picture of the new-born as the little reprint of her father'.¹⁰ Neely argues that 'childbirth is the literal and symbolic centre of the play...', and she notes the close attention paid to Hermione's pregnancy and the 'imagery of breeding, pregnancy and delivery' which 'transforms many actions and scenes into analogues of birth with emotional and symbolic ties to the literal birth of Perdita' and to the statue of Hermione, but she finds the meaning of birth is subject to a variety of interpretations (191).¹¹ Others have compared Leontes's irrational jealousy to a pregnancy. Stephen Orgel describes Leontes's mental state, and his circular processes of reasoning, in terms of self-generation.¹² Peter Erickson describes Leontes's dreams as 'a parody of procreation'.¹³

As well as the use of breeding images to describe events, *The Winter's Tale* is structured around a series of complex pregnancies, each of which is performed. As well as Hermione's pregnancy, I also explore two figurative pregnancies: that of

children structuring the Jacobean romance plots may really mask a suppressed anxiety originating not from the subject position of grieving parent but from that of grieving child'. (219). Paster thus construes Leontes's jealousy of Polixenes as that of 'twinn'd lambs' competing for the same maternal breast (264).

⁸ See Graham Holderness, 'The Winter's Tale: Country into Court', Graham Holderness, Nick Potter and John Turner (eds), Turner (intro.), *Shakespeare Out of Court: Dramatizations of Court Society*, (London: Macmillan, 1990), 195-235, at 209.

⁹ 'The Rhetoric of Animation', 17. Enterline argues that the final scene works 'to reclaim another, "better" mode of generation than the one that so disturbs Leontes's understanding...' (25). When Paulina brings the statue to life with her words, she may appear as a female Pygmalion, but 'we must also remember Ceres's curse' (43). By setting his tale in Sicily, Shakespeare invokes the animated statue but turns attention away from it. Female voices in *The Winter's Tale* are a reminder that, in the Ovidian tradition, 'stories about poetic authority, creativity or "voice," however purely "poetic" their claims may seem, nonetheless entail violence against the female body' (44).

¹⁰ *Shakespeare's Images of Pregnancy*, 89. Sacks refers to Paulina's description of the infant Perdita as a print or copy of himself (2.3.99-103).

¹¹ See also Donna B. Hamilton, 'The Winter's Tale and the Language of Union, 1604-1610', *Shakespeare Studies*, XXI (1993), 228-250. Hamilton argues that the play represents an ideal to which James I and the British people aspired: union between England and Scotland, represented in the single figure of Hermione, 'in whom all can relate meaning and relationship' (246).

¹² Introduction to Oxford World's Classics *The Winter's Tale*: 'self-generating' 19 (twice), and 21; and 'each item generating the next' 20.

¹³ *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama*. (Berkeley, Cal. and London: University of California Press, 1985), 148-172, at 153.

Leontes and the one leading to the 'rebirth' of Hermione. The delusions of Leontes are a condition created in his unstable mind, a drama of his own authorship in which he stars with an adulterous Hermione, whose pregnancy provides much of the subject-matter. This false conception, which Camillo describes as 'a diseased opinion' (1.2.299), takes over the mind of Leontes in the way that a false pregnancy invades the womb, stifling his love for Perdita. It is unclear who is the begetter of the reborn Hermione. But the manner of her rebirth appears to be the conception of Paulina, whose role can be compared to that of parent, midwife, author and stage manager.

The dramatic narrative in *The Winter's Tale* is developed through a range of theatrical techniques—visual images, speech and silence, direct presentation and indirect report, presence and absence, comedy and tragedy. The play comments on their effectiveness to create meaning and bring the play to a conclusion. For example, Act 5, scene 2, links birth to theatrical performance: Autolycus says: 'I would most gladly know the issue of it' (5.2.7), to which the First Gentleman replies: 'I make a broken delivery of the business' (5.2.8). The First Gentleman says of the Kings:

There was speech in their dumbness, language in their very gesture. They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed....but the wisest beholder that knew no more but seeing, could not say if th'importance were joy or sorrow. But in the extremity of the one it must needs be. (5.2.11-17)

The Third Gentleman, Paulina's steward says the reunion was 'a sight that was to be seen, cannot be spoken of. There might you have beheld one joy crown another, so and in such manner that it seemed sorrow wept to take leave of them, for their joy waded in tears' (5.2.38-41). But their faces were so contorted with emotion, 'they were to be known only by garment, not by favour' (5.2.42-44). In Paulina, the joy and sorrow are fused in a mask: 'But O, the noble combat that 'twixt joy and sorrow was fought in Paulina! She had one eye declined for the loss of her husband, another elevated that the oracle was fulfilled...' (5.2.66-69). It is clear that both the First Gentleman and Paulina's Steward found what they experienced as spectators intensely moving and full of wonder, although they claim that they did not know what the characters felt or even who was speaking.

The Second Gentleman, by comparison, can explain all the salient facts:

Nothing but bonfires. The oracle is fulfilled. The King's daughter is found. Such a deal of wonder is broken out within this hour, that ballad-makers cannot be able to express it. (5.2.20-23)

His succinct account provides all the details but expresses no sense of wonder. It appears he was not present and he is inclined to dismiss what he has heard as 'so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion' (5.2.25-27).¹⁴

¹⁴ Cleomenes and Dion convey a sense of dramatic wonder when they discuss their visit to the Temple of Apollo without conveying any worthwhile information about what took place. Cleomenes describes the setting (3.1.1-3), but was overwhelmed by the voice of the oracle without understanding what was said (3.1.8-10). Dion enjoyed the costumes and the ceremony (3.1.3-8). A powerfully dramatic scene comes to life through their words but gains in mystery, I suggest, because they cannot explain exactly what went on. There is self-reference of a different kind when Hermione speaks of her unhappiness at being tried as 'more than history can pattern, though devised/ And played to take spectators' (3.2.33-35). For a discussion of opacity and incomprehensibility in *The Winter's Tale*, see the section

As with earlier chapters, I will finish with a section which discusses the implications of the performance of Hermione's pregnancy by a boy actor in the light of these broader meanings of performance and of pregnancy.¹⁵

'Nine changes of the watery star'

Hermione first appears with her husband Leontes, King of Sicilia, their son, Mamillius, Polixenes, the childhood friend of Leontes, and members of the court. What is taking place is a performance of male power and rivalry in a long-lasting royal friendship. Polixenes has just announced his imminent departure.¹⁶ The immediate matter for discussion is whether Polixenes departs, as he intends, or accedes to the demands of Leontes that he stay longer, but the exchange between the two kings involves a performance of their power and status as kings. Leontes makes it clear, later in the scene, that he is aware that he takes part in a performance, although the nature of the performance has changed, and that his part will not be popular with the audience. He says to Mamillius: 'Go play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I/ Play too; but so disgraced a part, whose issue/ Will hiss me to my grave' (1.2.188-189).

Hermione's pregnancy is part of a performance of successful succession in Sicilia where, like England, there was a royal family. After a long period since the death of Henry VIII, during which succession had been a matter of concern, James I was provided with three heirs when he acceded to the throne. But royal heirs can die without warning, as *The Winter's Tale* itself demonstrates through the death of Mamillius. The coincidental death of Prince Henry in 1612, meant the play had 'an eerie topicality' at performances in 1613 to celebrate the marriage of Princess Elizabeth (16).¹⁷

Hermione appears on stage as an accessory to Leontes in his role of powerful king, enhancing his performance like a costume worn by an actor. Leontes later makes it clear that he sees Hermione as an adjunct to male potency, when he identifies Polixenes as the man with whom she has been unfaithful: 'Why he that wears her like her medal,/ Hanging about his neck, Bohemia....' (1.2.309-310). Miniature portraits in lockets were popular love tokens but, in the context of the friendship of the two kings, there is also the implication is that there has been a contest between Leontes

'Obscurity and Elucidation' in Orgel, *The Winter's Tale*, 6-12 and his article, 'The Poetics of Incomprehensibility', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42 (1991), 431-437. For a discussion of off-stage action in *The Winter's Tale*, see Howard Felperin, *The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, republished as paperback with corrections in 1992), 35-55.

¹⁵ My discussion is almost exclusively confined to scenes in Sicilia. As my interest in Perdita is as the product of Hermione's pregnancy, I do not explore the events leading up to her marriage to Florizel or other aspects of parental control of children with which I deal in the last two chapters.

¹⁶ Erickson argues that a tension in male institutions appears under the polite surface of Act 1, scene 2, which speaks of courtly entertainment in terms of a debt owed by kings to other kings so that 'mutuality is threatened because the two cannot give equally' (150); and this treatment of 'entertainment' as calculation, which Camillo tries to remove, contrasts with the mutual trading of 'innocence for innocence' (150).

¹⁷ See Orgel, *The Winter's Tale*, 15-16. Like James I, Leontes is a ruler seeking to exercise absolute political power but the play was popular with James who apparently did not regard it as commenting on the abuses to which absolute power can be put.

and Polixenes and that Hermione is the trophy.¹⁸ For Leontes, the meaning of a woman does not lie in herself but as it relates to a man.

Hermione's pregnancy thus has meaning because she is Leontes's queen. Her condition is reflected in numerous veiled or ambiguous textual references during Act 1, scene 2, to 'breeding', 'multiplying', and the 'nine changes of the wat'ry star' which Polixenes identifies as the period of his absence from Bohemia, thus linking the female element to the normal gestation period.¹⁹ It is only in the following scene that specific reference is made to Hermione's state, when her ladies discuss the fact that she 'rounds apace' (2.1.17), and is 'spread of late/ Into a goodly bulk' (2.1.20-21), and tease Mamillius about the coming birth of a 'new prince' (2.1.17-18).

A pregnant Hermione thus signifies Leontes's enduring sexual potency and demonstrates that succession to the throne of Sicilia is more secure than Polixenes can claim for Bohemia, as no mention is made of a new child to be born there.²⁰ Hermione also exemplifies an ideal of womanly subjection in that she remains silent until Leontes calls for her support. His words are in the form of a command: 'Tongue-tied our queen? Speak you' (1.2.27)? Hermione obeys Leontes, by speaking, and her words achieve the result Leontes appears to desire because Polixenes decides to stay longer. For Leontes, it is significant that Polixenes listens to Hermione: 'At my request he would not' (1.2.89). In practice, standards of courtly behaviour would have obligated Polixenes to remain once he was given such an insistent invitation from the queen.²¹ But even as Leontes appears to achieve his immediate goal, when Polixenes agrees to stay longer, the meaning of Hermione's pregnancy, as proof of a certain succession for Sicilia, is clouded in his mind.

As well as constituting a performance of the power of Leontes, centred on Hermione's pregnancy, Act 1, scene 2, can thus be seen as a comment on the limitations of performance. Leontes has arranged a performance, the meaning of

¹⁸ See 1.2.309, fn. 7.

¹⁹ When the audience first sees Hermione, Polixenes mentions that he has been away from Bohemia for 'nine changes of the wat'ry star' (1.2.1), nine months; the normal term of pregnancy, with the reference to the moon, as a 'wat'ry star' signifying the female element. Polixenes describes his absence from Bohemia as leaving his throne without a 'burden' (1.2.3). He says that, unable to thank Leontes sufficiently, he will 'multiply/ With one "We thank you" many thousands more/ That go before it' (1.2.7-9). He fears 'what may chance/ Or breed upon our absence..' (1.2.11-12). Neely, identifies many such 'submerged metaphorical references' to human procreation throughout the play (191-192).

²⁰ Act 1, scene 2 has already established the hopes invested in the 'gallant child' Mamillius (1.1.29-35); Florizel's existence is established when Hermione refers to him 'To tell he longs to see his son were strong' (1.2.34).

²¹ Holderness argues that the language of Hermione and Polixenes is not only appropriate to their rank and situation; it has been specifically commanded by the king. In urging Hermione to persuade Polixenes, Leontes is commissioning a particular form of courtly 'entertainment' (204). I argue in this chapter that Leontes's suspicions are akin to 'the mother', an irrational affliction affecting women and sourced in the womb, and that they constitute a false pregnancy in his brain. So it is not my aim to provide a rational explanation for them. In any case, as Orgel notes, the only people who try to justify Leontes are editors and critics (22-28, at 23). But Leontes's jealousy might first be of Hermione, for her success with Polixenes. In my view, his jealousy of the supposed relationship with Polixenes comes later. But see Erickson, who argues that the problem comes later than Hermione's apparent success with Polixenes and that the 'constriction in Hermione's power' appears when she moves to contention with Leontes, who interprets 'What? have I twice said well? etc' (1.1.92) as a sharp challenge (152).

which changes once he allows Hermione to speak without knowing exactly what she will say or how she will perform.

'Ha' you not seen, Camillo—...My wife is slippery?'

Leontes has attempted to use Hermione's pregnancy to demonstrate his relative superiority to Polixenes, and her ladies regard it as a sign of joyous increase, as discussed. But when her ladies speak in Act 2, scene 1, the audience already knows that Leontes mistrusts Hermione's chastity, that he has even queried whether Mamillius is 'his boy' (1.2.119) and that he has asked Camillo:

Ha' you not seen, Camillo—...
My wife is slippery? (1.2.269-275)

'Slippery' means 'licentious, wanton, unchaste; of doubtful morality', and when used of a woman, it also implies that she is sexually prepared, in line with the earlier comment by Leontes, when Hermione gives her hand to Polixenes, that their behaviour is 'Too hot, too hot:' (1.2.110).²² It can also suggest something on which it is impossible to get a proper grasp, a foetus or a new-born royal baby which is either a legitimate heir or a bastard.

From signifying the superior potency of Leontes, Hermione's pregnancy turns in his mind into proof of adultery, and the benign rounded image invoked by her ladies is transformed into something swollen:

...let her sport herself
With that she's big with, [to Hermione] for 'tis Polixenes
Has made thee swell thus. (2.1.62-64)

The loyal queen has been transformed into a 'bed-swarver' (2.1.95). For a husband who is a king, an adulterous pregnant queen, far from signifying that succession is secure, places it in doubt. As had been demonstrated in the trial of Anne Boleyn, adultery on the part of a queen was regarded as such a threat to the kingdom that it constituted treason and, almost by definition, conspiracy.

Although his diseased conception appears to stem from Hermione's giving her hand to Polixenes, or his realisation that Polixenes listened to Hermione rather than to him, his belief that Hermione bears his bastard takes a while to develop fully. The suspicions of Leontes about Polixenes and Hermione lead to his request to Camillo to kill Polixenes. This prompts their flight, apparently demonstrating that there was a conspiracy in which Camillo was involved, and thus further strengthening his belief that Hermione is unfaithful: 'Camillo was his help in this, his pander./ There is a plot against my life, my crown...' (2.1.48-49).²³ At this stage, he makes the full-scale accusation that Hermione's child is not his, as if what Camillo calls his 'diseased conception' has quickened in his brain.

²² *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 2020-2021.: 'Slippery', Sense 2.b: 'Of persons: Difficult to catch or hold 1573'; Sense 3: 'Of conditions, affairs, etc.: Unstable, uncertain, insecure; that cannot be relied upon as lasting or assured 1548'; Sense 5: 'Licentious, unchaste; of doubtful morality....1586'.

²³ At her trial, Hermione is 'accused and arraigned of high treason in committing adultery with Polixenes, King of Bohemia, and conspiring with Camillo to take away the life of our sovereign lord the king, thy royal husband' and 'contrary to the faith and allegiance of a true subject didst counsel and aid [Polixenes and Camillo]...for their better safety to fly away by night (3.1.12-19). For a discussion of the history of adultery in early modern English history, see Orgel, 28-32.

Hermione's status as a queen is also 'slippery' in the mind of Leontes. Earlier, in a soliloquy, he has described Hermione as typical of all women and himself as like all husbands whose wives cannot be controlled. In this speech, Hermione is not a sign of distinction to be worn to signify kingly power but a more ordinary possession. But as an ordinary woman, as with a royal one, her meaning relates to her husband and his status. It is not simply that her pregnancy cannot be judged without considering her marital status. Leontes looks at her and reads his own potential humiliation, claiming to gain comfort from the knowledge that he is not unique:

There have been,
Or I am much deceived, cuckolds ere now
And many a man there is, even at this present,
Now, while I speak this, holds his wife by th' arm,
That little thinks she has been sluiced in's absence,
And his pond fished by his next neighbour, by
Sir Smile, his neighbour. Nay, there's comfort in't,
Whiles other men have gates, and those gates opened,
As mine against their will....
No barricado for a belly. Know't
It will let in and out the enemy
With bag and baggage. (1.2.191-207)

I will return later to Leontes's description of Hermione as a form of real estate. By presenting himself as sharing a common destiny of cuckoldry with other men, Leontes universalises inherent sexual dishonesty in women, a view that is reinforced by his courtiers when they defend her. Antigonus, in particular, claims that 'every inch of woman in the world/ Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false/ If she be' (2.1.139-141). Camillo states: 'I cannot believe this crack to be in my dread mistress' linking a 'flaw' or 'defect' with a slang word for vagina and thus reinforcing dishonesty in women as linked to their common state, female sexuality (1.2.323-324).²⁴

The dramatic effect of *The Winter's Tale* depends on Hermione's innocence, even though that is not proved, except by divine assertion. I suggest that when Leontes likens himself to other men, so that Hermione is equated with the inherent dishonesty of women, the effect is to create a split between Hermione the queen, for whom special considerations apply, and Hermione the woman, whose honesty, like that of other women, is open to doubt. What occurs to Hermione demonstrates the dangers of judging something that is essentially outside the realms of proof. But while the play establishes Hermione's innocence, the misogynistic prejudices about women's sexual honesty remain unchallenged.

'Were I a tyrant,/ Where were her life?'

While exercising the absolute power of a king, Leontes's performance of power lies largely in asserting a knowledge that is impervious to contradiction. He denies that he is a tyrant: 'Were I a tyrant,/ Where were her life?' (2.3.122-123).²⁵ He allows

²⁴ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, 447. 'Crack', Sense II.2: '...a fissure; a partial fracture 1530'; Sense II. 3: 'A flaw, deficiency, unsoundness 1570'; Sense III. *Trans...* 4. [? from II.3] a prostitute -1785). "Crack" means 'a rupture of chastity, whether directly or by indirection, the vulva', Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy; A Literary, Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary* (London: Routledge, 1947), 96.

²⁵ Lady Mary Wroth's *The Countesse of Montgomerie's Urania* makes a strong connection between tyranny and:

Footnote(s) continued on following page(s)

his courtiers to defend Hermione but he dismisses their arguments and they cannot prevent his actions (2.1.129-201). He also sends Cleomenes and Dion to Apollo's temple at Delphos, 'for a greater confirmation—/ For in an act of this importance 'twere/ Most piteous to be wild' (2.1.182-184). He states that he, himself, does not require further proof: 'Though I am satisfied and need no more/ Than what I know, yet shall the oracle/ Give rest to th' minds of others' (2.1.191-193). In the event, before the report from Delphos is received, he sends Antigonus to Bohemia with the baby. Knowing that Cleomenes and Dion are due to arrive any moment, he decides to arraign Hermione, as he says, to ensure she has a 'just and open trial. While she lives/ My heart will be a burden to me' (3.1.198-206). Thus although he exercises the power to name Hermione an adulteress, and no other voice is effective to prevent him, Leontes looks to a 'just and open trial' to give the appearance of justice. But he is unable to make the trial a fair one by asserting that it is so, and what he performs is the very tyranny he denies.

Hermione's defenders demonstrate that if a woman is denounced as unchaste, it is useless to deny the charge unless it is supported by evidence which can be disproved. If the charge is made without evidence, no defence is possible simply by alleging the woman's chastity. However, in addition to asserting that, unlike the chastity of other women, Hermione's is beyond doubt, the courtiers also imply a pragmatic form of defence based on the potential scandal and disruption to the succession if Leontes persists with his allegations. At one point, Leontes appears to be so sure that Hermione is unfaithful that he is prepared to 'give scandal to the blood of the prince' (1.2.326-335). But Camillo gives a conditional agreement to poison Polixenes if Leontes:

Will take again your queen as yours at first,
Even for your son's sake, and thereby for sealing
The injury of tongues in courts and kingdoms
Known and allied to yours. (1.2.335-341)

Leontes appears to agree: 'I'll give no blemish to her honour, none. (1.2.343). In the event, Camillo's flight 'proves' to Leontes that Hermione is unfaithful and that the child is a bastard. Even then, in his desire to defend Hermione, Antigonus speaks as if he considers that an heir, about whom there is no suspicion, is preferable to one whose mother has been shown to be unfaithful. Just as secure succession is performed through Hermione's pregnant body, at the beginning of Act 1, scene 2, the illegitimacy of the succession of Mamillius might also be performed through publicly denouncing Hermione as unfaithful. Antigonus says 'And I wish, my liege,/ You had only in your silent judgment tried it/ Without more overture' (2.2.172-174). In a society in which first heirs might suddenly die, so that Hermione's second child would become the heir, the implication is that a false heir might thus be as satisfactory as a true one, as long as the public believed in the legitimacy. Legitimacy itself would thus be performed for a child by its parents and other courtiers, rather than being something that could otherwise be judged.

False Hope which feeds but to destroy and spill
What it first breeds, unnatural; to the birth
Of thine owne wombe, conceiving but to kill
And plenty gives to make the greater dearth

I am grateful to Dr. Belinda Lee for pointing out this quotation.

At the trial, the charges are read, Hermione is required to plead and makes what I regard as a powerful statement of innocence:

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation, and
The testimony on my part no other
But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
To say 'Not Guilty'. Mine integrity
Being counted falsehood shall, as I express it,
Be so received. But thus: if powers divine
Behold our human actions—as they do—
I doubt not then but innocence shall make
False accusation blush, and tyranny
Tremble at patience. (3.2.20-30)

Enterline argues that 'Shakespeare defines the play's time as one of broken linguistic conventions', so that 'a speaking *maternal* body' is not able to utter an effective 'Not Guilty' (34). Hermione's comment on her own speaking, like Paulina's false oath that Hermione is dead, connects the transformation of language into action with the play's two chief preoccupations: the 'truth' of the female body and the effects of theatrical representation' (33). Thus, Enterline argues, Hermione's inability to testify to her innocence does not enable her to live as an innocent. Her innocence is only restored when Paulina falsely swears that Hermione is dead (32-33). But Hermione's refusal to say 'Not Guilty' 'turns Leontes's court into a mockery, the ruse of a tyrant who has already decided the verdict' and also into the 'mock courtroom of a play' (35).

As Hermione expects, her words do not persuade Leontes but, in my view, they are effective speech exactly because they convey the injustice of a show trial, where the result is already decided. In the course of denying her capacity to persuade him she says everything that it is possible for her to say. Her visual image is regal. As she points out, she has shared the throne with Leontes, as well as his bed (3.2.35-37). She is a 'great king's daughter' (3.2.37): 'The Emperor of Russia was my father' (3.2.117). She is yet obliged to attend on trial 'fore/ Who please to come and hear' (3.2.39-40). Coupled with her image, her words make a statement more powerful than a simple 'Not Guilty'. She presents herself as vulnerable, as well as powerful. She has lost the love of her husband. Both children have been taken from her. She has been rushed from her bed soon after her confinement, reminding the audience that birth did not occur in a secure place within her home but in prison, before any trial has found her guilty. In fact, she openly and specifically says that what has happened to her is false and tyrannous. Her speech is certainly more effective in achieving a limited goal than Paulina's speech, discussed in the following section.

'The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay, the valley,/ The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek'

During an early modern pregnancy, it was impossible to identify the father and, even when the child was born, when its appearance might provide some proof, the nature of the proof was complex. Paulina tries to persuade Leontes that Perdita bears a marked visible resemblance to himself, as discussed below. In a performance, the effect of insisting on a resemblance might well force attention to the fact that it does not exist. In *The Winter's Tale*, references to physical similarities draw attention to the very complex way in which resemblances are constructed. Leontes sees in Mamillius the image of himself as an 'unbreached youth' (1.2.155-162). Polixenes

describes himself and Leontes at this age, as identical, like 'twinned lambs' (1.2.69). It is therefore possible that Mamillius also looks like Polixenes. But despite all his anxieties about Hermione's infidelity and Perdita's bastard status, Leontes never really doubts that Mamillius is his son. He speaks of his nose: 'They say it is a copy out of mine..../ Yet they say we are almost as like as eggs. Women say so,/ That will say anything...' yet were it true to say this boy were like me' (1.2.124-137). Later, in Act 5, scene 1, as Florizel's arrival is spoken of, Paulina tells Leontes: 'Had our prince/ Jewel of children, seen this hour, he had paired/ Well with this lord' (5.1.115-117). Leontes welcomes Florizel with the words: 'Your mother was most true to wedlock, Prince,/ For she did print your royal father off,/ Conceiving you' (5.1.123-125), and says to Florizel: 'Were I but twenty-one,/ Your father's image is so hit in you,/ His very air, that I should call you brother/ As I did him' (5.1.125-128). Both fathers look like each other and, if Mamillius was still alive, he would resemble Florizel.

Leontes uses the image of the copy or print to satisfy himself that Mamillius is the same as he was at the same age, and to compare Florizel to his father, attributing that similarity to the fidelity of Florizel's mother. In seeking to establish Perdita's legitimacy, Paulina says:

Although the print be little, the whole matter
And copy of the father: eye, nose, lip,
The trick of's frown, his forehead, nay, the valley,
The pretty dimples of his chin and cheek, his smiles,
The very mould and frame of hand, nail finger....(2.3.99-103)

She thus obliterates the normal distinctions that could be attributed to sex, age and experience. The baby's 'frown' is similar to that of Leontes and Leontes has acquired 'pretty dimples'. Perhaps because the issue at stake is to prove that Leontes is the father, in using the image of the print or copy, she places responsibility on Leontes for the similarity: 'It is yours;/ And might we lay th'old proverb to your charge,/ So like you, 'tis the worse' (2.3-97-98).

Both Leontes and Paulina appear to assume that a child will take after its father, in line with the comments of Sir Thomas Browne. Writing of superfetation, the principle that the womb can sometimes reopen during pregnancy to admit more male seed and allow a second conception, Browne mentions: '...those superconceptions where one childe was like the father, the other like the adulterer, the one favoured the servant, the other resembled the master'.²⁶ According to Ambroise Paré, children take their appearance from both parents, or possibly their grandparents, but are more often like their father than their mother, because women think of their husbands during intercourse more frequently than men think of their wives. In 'the time of copulation or conception, the formes, or the likenesses of those things that are conceived or kept in minde, are transported and impressed in the childe or issue'.²⁷ Jane Sharp, in *The Midwives Book*, comes to similar conclusions. Some children take after one parent or another, sometimes both parents and sometimes neither parent but a grandparent or other relation. But 'there are many examples where

²⁶ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*: or, *Enquiries into very many Received Tenents and Commonly Presumed Truths* (London. 1646; Larry-Ted Pebworth (pref.). fac. rpt. Menston: Eng. Scholar Press. 1972), 150.

²⁷ *Of the Generation of Man*, 888.

children have been like to those who have had no part in the work; but a strong fancy of the mother hath been the reason of it' (121-122).

If paternity was disputed, the problems for the woman are obvious. A child that did not resemble its father might be either the product of an adulterous liaison or of the wandering imagination of a woman having intercourse with her husband. A child which was the image of her husband might only have resembled him because she had deceitfully focussed her thoughts on the husband, while she had intercourse with another man. So even if Leontes could detect a similarity between him and Perdita, the similarity would establish nothing. In any case, when she has grown up, Perdita's resemblance to Leontes is not obvious. There is no longer any need for Perdita to look like Leontes and one of the proofs of her identity is now 'the majesty of the creature, in resemblance of the mother' (5.2.32-33). But she may not resemble Hermione either. Polixenes, Camillo, Leontes and Paulina see Perdita without noticing that she is the image of Hermione, which is only made apparent when the Shepherd produces the 'fardel' and describes how he found the child (5.2.3-7). Their failure to notice the striking resemblance is notable because there are discussions, prompted by Paulina, which require a comparison of the two women. A Servant, who used to write poetry about Hermione says, once he has seen Perdita: 'The one I have almost forgot..../ The other, when she has obtained your eye,/ Will have your tongue too' (5.1.104-106). Leontes comes closest to noting a resemblance: 'I thought of her/ Even in these looks I made' (5.1.226-227), but this follows an exchange in which he, having seen Perdita, expresses his desire for her: 'Would he do so, I'd beg your precious mistress,/ Which he counts but a trifle' (5.1.222-223) and Paulina attacks him because 'Not a month/ Fore your queen died she was worth more such gazes/ Than what you look on now' (5.1.224-226).

Paulina seeks to establish that Perdita is the daughter of Leontes by establishing a visual resemblance, although she relies on the power of language to describe the baby in a manner she thinks Leontes will understand. Leontes exercises his political will and names the baby 'bastard'. According to early modern law, Perdita does not fit the definition of a bastard, 'a child born out of lawful marriage'; if the husband is 'within the four seas' and the 'wife have issue, no proof is to be admitted to prove the child a bastard....unless the husband hath an impossibility of procreation, as if the child be but eight years old'.²⁸ Leontes insists that Polixenes is the father and that Perdita is a bastard: 'This brat is none of mine./ It is the issue of Polixenes' (2.3.93-94); 'Shall I live on, to see this bastard kneel/ And call me father?' (2.3.155-156); 'You that have been so tenderly officious/ With Lady Margery your midwife there,/ To save this bastard's life—for 'tis a bastard....' (2.3.159-161); 'We enjoin thee,/....that thou carry/ This female bastard hence....' (2.3.173-175); 'You had a bastard by Polixenes,/ And I but dreamed it' (3.2.81-82). He thus makes clear his aversion for women's speech and also implies that midwives are officious women whose power should be curtailed.

In the end, Leontes insists on the validity of his own assertions and ignores Paulina's attempts to prove his paternity, and what she achieves is to have Perdita taken away and exposed, leading to the death of her own husband. Her actions can also be said to precipitate the decision of Leontes to put Hermione on trial, which leads to her

²⁸ Lord Chief Justice Coke, *First Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* (4th edition, 1639), Book 3, Sec. 399, 244; quoted by Orgel, 30, fn. 3.

'death'. While Paulina is clearly correct in what she believes, her intervention has negative effects and, if she is to be likened to a midwife at this stage of the play, the issue is not a happy one.

'My life is in the level of your dreams'

From taking part in a performance of power, in which he is the central character, Leontes finds himself at a different performance at which he is an imperfect spectator. This becomes progressively a drama of his own authorship, in which Hermione has committed adultery. Leontes establishes the meaning of what he sees and places his own interpretation on what he hears. When Hermione gives her hand to Polixenes, he interprets her gesture as 'Too hot, too hot:' (1.2.110), with its implications of sexuality. He watches as Hermione and Polixenes are 'paddling palms and pinching fingers,/As now they are' (1.2.117-118), and 'Still virginalling/ Upon his palm?' (1.2.128-129).²⁹ What Leontes and the audience can see on stage depends on the actors playing Hermione and Polixenes but Leontes soon moves from what he can see and interpret as dangerous, to seeing facial expressions it is very likely he has imagined: 'and making practised smiles/ As in a looking glass; and then to sigh as 'twere/ Th' mort o'th' deer' (1.2.118-120). When he meets Camillo, there is an exchange in which Leontes can find proof, in almost every word Camillo uses, that Hermione is unfaithful. Camillo notes that Leontes was not successful: 'You had much ado to make his anchor hold;/ When you cast out, it still came home..../He would not stay at your petitions', to which Leontes says in an aside: 'They're here with me already, whisp'ring, rounding/ "Sicilia is a so-forth"' (1.2.215-218).

When Camillo refuses to accept that Hermione is unfaithful: "Shrew my heart,/ You never spoke what did become you less/ Than this' (1.2.283-285), Leontes is able to invent what he knows must already have taken place and to describe it as if he had seen it, starting with what appears to be a misinterpretation of what he can see, Hermione and Polixenes standing with their heads together, talking and laughing, but moving to his own invention: 'Is whispering nothing?/ Is leaning cheek to cheek?/ Is meeting noses?/ Kissing with inside lip? Stopping the career/ Of laughter with a sigh?—a note infallible/ Of breaking honesty. Horsing foot on foot?/ Skulking in corners' (1.2.286-291)? Leontes then moves to a description of what he believes to be the mental state of Hermione and Polixenes, something he could not possibly know and has thus constructed by his interpretation of later events:

Wishing clocks more swift,
Hours minutes, noon midnight? (1.2.291-292)

Leontes reveals that he, like everyone else, has been blinded to the adulterous relationship: 'And all eyes/ Blind with the pin and web, but theirs, theirs only,/ That would unseen be wicked?' (1.2.286-294). He later equates knowledge with sight, so that he believes it is his knowledge of her infidelity that has enabled him to see what he now realises was there all along.

²⁹ Orgel includes a stage direction at 1.2.108, that Hermione gives her hand to Polixenes, but no such direction appears in the First Folio. The textual references noted above constitute an implied stage direction.

He is poisoned by what he believes, as the cup is poisoned by the spider that is seen:

There may be in the cup
A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom for his knowledge
Is not infected; but if one present
Th'abhorrent ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides,
With violent hefts. I have drunk and seen the spider. (2.1.41-47)

Eventually, sight becomes irrelevant to him, so that he can describe what Hermione and Polixenes have done as 'gross as ever touched conjecture/ That lacked sight only, naught for approbation/ But only seeing, all other circumstances/ Made up to th' deed—doth push on the proceeding. (2.1.176-183). Leontes thus gives himself over to his own conception, as Hermione says at her trial, when she says: 'Sir,/ You speak a language that I understand not./ My life stands in the level of your dreams, /Which I'll lay down. (3.2.78-80). His suspicions have generated the proof that Hermione's behaviour is monstrous.

'I have tremor cordis on me. My heart dances,/ But not for joy, not joy'

While he suffers from his delusions, Leontes is said to be under malign planetary influences. Hermione says: 'There's some ill planet reigns./ I must be patient till the heavens look/ With an aspect more favourable' (2.1.107-109). Paulina says that Leontes is affected by 'dangerous unsafe lunes' (2.2.33). Camillo is even more specific in attributing Leontes's condition to the moon. He says:

Swear his thought over
By each particular star in heaven, and
By all their influences, you may as well
Forbid the sea for to obey the moon
As or by oath remove or counsel shake
The fabric of his folly, whose foundation
Is piled upon his faith, and will continue
The standing of his body. (1.2.424-431)

The link between the moon and the female reproductive system is established early in Act 1, scene 2, when Polixenes refers to the moon as a 'wat'ry star' and the nine months he has left his throne without a burden. To compare Leontes to the ocean, swept by a powerful surge which he must obey and which he cannot control, is thus to suggest that he is behaving hysterically, like a woman. Leontes also speaks of the influence of the planets on women's wombs. When he describes them as spaces men unsuccessfully strive to control, he refers to a 'bawdy planet', in this case not the moon but Venus (1.2.202).³⁰

But natural causes could also be responsible for Leontes's delusions. Edward Jorden, in *A Briefe Discovrse of A Disease Called The Suffocation of the Mother*, stresses that 'the Mother' is a natural disease, although its symptoms are 'monstrous and terrible to beholde', causing the ignorant to seek 'about the Moone for supernaturall

³⁰ Orgel identifies the havoc wrought by Venus, the planet that controls lechery. See 1.2.199-200, fn. See also Duncan Sackeld, *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993; distributed in the USA by St Martin's Press), 63-64.

causes: ascribing these accidents either to diabolicall possession, to witchcraft, or to the immediate finger of the Almighty'.³¹

Jorden argues that:

The passiuie condition of womankind is subject vnto more diseases
and of other sortes and natures then men are: and especially in
regarde of that part from whence this disease which we speake of
doth arise. (Sig. B^r)

The part of which he speaks is the womb, the matrix, 'the Mother', and the disease is called '*Passio Hysterica, Suffocatio, ...and Strangulatus vteri...&c*, In English the Mother, or the Suffocation of the Mother, because most commonly it takes them with choaking in the throat' (Sig. C^r). A commonly cited reference is Lear's 'O, how this mother swells up toward my heart,/ *Hysterica passio*, down, thou climbing sorrow,/ Thy element's below!' (2.4.54-56).³² As Jorden describes it, the parts other than the womb 'are not affected...but from the Mother:...which finding itselfe anoyed by some vnkind humor, either within it selfe, or in the vessels adioyning or belonging vnto it, doth...endeauour to expell that which is offensiuie:...the offence is communicated from thence' to the other parts of the body, principally 'the seates of the three faculties, which do gouerne the whole body. The brain of the animall, the hart of the vitall, the liuer of the naturall...' (Sig. C2^r).

A symptom of the mother affecting the 'vitall function' is when the heart beats 'too fast and quick, or when it beates disorderly':

The greater offence is when it beates disorderly, and keeps no equall
nor orderly stroke, but either tremebleth and daunceth in the motion
or else is violently impelled(Sig. D^v)

The 'palpitation or beating of the heart, or Arteries' is a symptom which is 'euriewhere mentioned by our Authours in this disease and our dayly experience confirmeth it' (Sig. D^v-D2^r). Although men do not have wombs, Jorden provides several examples of men who suffered or died from excessive irregular palpitations attributed to 'the Mother (Sig. D^v)'. When Hermione gives her hand to Polixenes, Leontes complains:

I have *tremor cordis* on me. My heart dances,
But not for joy, not joy. (1.2.112-113)

Orgel argues that *tremor cordis* is a condition 'ascribed by Galen to overheated blood' but seen more by the early seventeenth century medical profession as a symptom of 'an indeterminate disorder with an almost infinite range', although this

³¹ Edward Jorden, *A Brief Discovrse Of A Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (London, 1603). A facsimile reprint is included in Michael MacDonald (ed. and intro.), *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). MacDonald discusses the views of twentieth century historians of hysteria who argue that Jorden's importance lay in his insistence on physical causes for what had previously been attributed to supernatural ones (vii). He quotes Ilza Veith, *Hysteria: The History of a Disease* (Chicago, 1965). Veith argued that Jorden 'went beyond the classical discussions of the pathology of hysteria and rejected the notion that the malady was primarily a disturbance of the uterus' (123). MacDonald says that his aim is 'to challenge the prevailing view of Jorden's achievements' (viii) and to place Jorden's work in the context of a struggle between the church hierarchy and its Catholic and Puritan opponents (viii-ix). My discussion examines the physical aspects of 'the Mother', as described by Jorden, and the links he makes between the uterus and the brain. B2^r

³² Norton Shakespeare (2479-2553), see 2.4.54-56, fn. 1. See also, G.K.Hunter (ed. and intro), *King Lear* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1972), II.iv.54-56, Commentary, 233.

includes 'great sorrow, fright, great fear, and other motions of the mind'.³³ An alternative explanation is that when Leontes is affected by *tremor cordis* what he experiences is an onset of 'the Mother'.

The disease, as it affects the heart, also assumes a very different form in which the pulse is diminished, leading to 'Syncope or swoounding, the very image of death, where the pulse is scarcely or not at all perceyued' (Sig. D2^r). In this aspect, all the faculties of the body fail and the body itself lies 'like a dead corpse three or foure houres together, and sometimes two or three whole dayes...' (Sig. D2^r). Jorden refers to reports by medical authorities of patients in this situation who have been mistakenly assumed to be dead, making it necessary to enact laws 'that no woman which was subject to this disease should be buried vntil she had beene three dayes dead' (Sig. D2^r). Some women were even found alive in their graves after burial. He cites what he calls 'the most pitifull example' reported by Paré, of Vesalius, who was 'called to the opening' of a Spanish woman who was thought to be dead due to violent fits of 'the Mother' but cried out 'at the second cut of the knife...and stirred her limbes, shewing manifest signes of life to remaine' (Sig. D3^r).³⁴ When Hermione falls during her trial, Paulina claims that she is dying: 'The news is mortal to the Queen. Look down/ And see what death is doing' (3.2.146-147) but Leontes disagrees: 'Her heart is but o'ercharged. She will recover' (3.2.148).³⁵ Paulina later swears that Hermione is dead: 'I say she's dead—I'll swear't..../ If you can bring/ Tincture or lustre in her lip, her eye,/ Heat outwardly or breath within, I'll serve you/ As I would do the gods' (3.2.201-205). What Paulina describes is similar to Jorden's description of the women suffering from 'the Mother', who are presumed dead and later recover. As Paulina is a woman who, as Leontes has said, will 'say anything', her words are not conclusive; and it subsequently turns out that Paulina has continued to bemoan Hermione's death over a period of sixteen years during which she knew her to be alive. But Leontes demands to see the 'dead bodies of my Queen and son' (3.2.233) and can later report: 'I saw her,/ As I thought dead' (5.3.140-141). An attack of 'the Mother', of this kind, could explain how Leontes believed Hermione was dead when she was not. That Hermione might suffer from one form of 'the Mother', brought about by grief, strengthens the possibility that the heart of Leontes is subject to a different form of the same disease.

The disease of 'the Mother' also affects the 'animall faculties', that is the brain, 'whereby we do understand, iudge and remember....' (Sig. D3^v). Jorden distinguishes the brain from the heart and liver, in that it is 'subject vnto our wil, & may be...remitted, or peruerted at our pleasure', in a way that is impossible with, for example, the pulse (Sig. D4^r). Some of Jorden's examples of the power of the will to control the brain involve theatrical representation of a kind that would be useful for actors in *The Winter's Tale*: 'one who could weepe when he list'; people who make

³³ 1.2.109, fn. Orgel cites Christopher Wirtzung's *General Practise Of Physicke* (London, 1617), 263.

³⁴ The 'pity' which Jorden describes relates not so much to the woman who experienced this ordeal as to Vesalius who was so distressed at what occurred that he 'pretended (as others say) a pilgrimage for the absenting of himselfe, and therein died' (Sig. D3^r).

³⁵ The Folio has no stage direction at this point but Paulina's language makes it clear that Hermione has fallen.

their bodies 'stiff like an image'; and some that can 'counterfait madnes..(Sig. D4^r).³⁶ But this ability to abuse 'the animall function' is subject to 'the Mother'.

Jorden describes the effect of 'the Mother' on the internal senses, as when a man 'doth imagine, judge, or remember thinges that are not as if they were, or things that are, otherwise then they are indeed. Whether they do it in cogitation alone, or do expresse it by word or deede' (Sig. E^r). This aspect of 'the Mother' involves wakefulness but also dreams (Sig. E^v). Sight, taste, smell and feeling are also affected although this appears to be a loss or diminution in function, for example when 'the parts are benumbed or do not feele at all' (Sig.E2^r), rather than the false apprehension of imaginary sights, tastes, smells or sensations. On the whole, hearing appears to continue unchanged, but in some reported cases where hearing has been affected, Jorden attributes this to the effect of the disease on the imagination and reason (E2^r), which might refer to aural hallucinations, as in: 'They're here with me already, whisp'ring, rounding/ "Sicilia is a so-forth"....' (1.2.217-218).

As already discussed, the judgement of Leontes, once he begins to doubt Hermione, is affected so that he substitutes his own interpretations, even to the extent of seeing and hearing things that have not taken place. He suffers from sleeplessness. When Paulina visits him, she is at first denied access because as the Servant says: Madam, he hath not slept tonight, commanded/ None should come at him' (2.3.31-32); Leontes has described his state as: 'Nor night nor day, no rest (2.3.1).

As well as sleeplessness, Leontes also dreams. He makes a sarcastic comment when he responds to Hermione's complaint that he has imposed his dreams on her life:

Your actions are my 'dreams'.
You had a bastard by Polixenes
And I but dreamed it. (3.2.80-82)

In the event, it is clear that it was Leontes who dreamed and that his sarcasm was as misguided as his other judgements about Hermione, Polixenes, Camillo, Paulina, Antigonus and his other courtiers.

Although it is a disease specifically linked to the womb and thus a women's disease, Jorden makes it clear that it is not unusual for a man to suffer from 'the Mother'. Homology, the theory discussed in the Introduction, that women were men with inverted genitals, makes it easier to accept how a man without a womb can suffer from a disease of the womb. But in another sense, when Leontes is 'transported by my jealousies' (3.2.156), he becomes a creature with a womb and thus acts as much like a woman as he does like a man.

'Give me the boy. I am glad you did not nurse him/ Though he does bear some signs of me,...yet you/ Have too much blood in him'

Early modern medical authorities agreed that both women and men contributed to the conception of a child, the roles of each being different, most notably because men begot the children and women bore them, nourished them in the womb and gave birth. In a discussion 'Of the Difference of the Sexes', Helkiah Crooke outlined

³⁶ 'The Mother' itself was a highly spectacular condition and treated as such by those who sought to cure it. Jorden describes as 'spectacular events', the trials to determine whether Mary Glover, a young girl, was bewitched. Glover's fits became 'a kind of show' (xiii).

Aristotle's theory that, for procreation, it was necessary 'that there should be a double creature, one which should beget in another, and another that should generate in it selfe'.³⁷ The first, the male, being 'originally the hotter, and therefore the first principle of the work, and besides affordeth the greatest part of the formative power or faculty' (271). The female, being colder, 'affordeth the place where the seede is conceived, and the matter whereby the Conception is nourished and sustained, which matter is the crude and raw remainders of her owne aliment' (271). Aristotle further proposed that Nature intended the generation of males, so that the female is a biological accident. Crooke disagreed:

For we think that Nature aswell intendeth the generation of a female as of a male: and therefore it is vnworthily said that she is an Error or Monster in nature. (271)

In describing conception, Crooke speaks of cases where the generation 'goe[s] rightly on' and 'both sexes doe afford fruitfull and pure seeds which are poured out into the womb as it were into a fertill field' (285).³⁸ The exact nature of the woman's contribution was confused. When describing why both sexes are necessary for conception, Crooke notes that while women, like men, produce seed, the seed of women 'is but weak and too cold' (286). As noted in the previous chapter, Crooke leaves some scope for doubt about spontaneous generation in a woman when, having explained the reasons why a woman cannot 'generate in herself without man's help' he says: 'I speak of a lawfull generation' (286), without elaborating on what he means by lawful.

Paré describes seed and the coming together of male and female seed to form the child, which 'presently mixed and conjoyned, are received and kept in the females womb' (885). but 'the seed of the male being cast and received into the wombe, is accounted the principall and efficient cause, but the seede of the female is reputed the subjacent matter, or the matter whereon it worketh' (885). Sharp repeats the imagery that figures women primarily as a space, even as she argues that women also contribute seed: man is 'the agent and tiller and sower of the Ground, Woman is the Patient or Ground to be tilled, who brings seed also as well as the Man to sow the ground with' (33-34). Boutilier describes the same ambivalence in other medical texts between the concept of simultaneous ejaculation of seed by men and women, as equally necessary for conception, and the concept of the woman as a vessel or ground into which seed is poured by the man which is nourished by her blood. She notes John Sadler, for example, who speaks of man as 'Agent' and woman as 'Patient, or weaker vessell' but also states that the rules of conception require 'a concurse [sic] of both seeds at the same instant'.³⁹

³⁷ Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia*, 270-271:

³⁸ Aristotle's *Master-Piece* uses the image of the seed as workman, in discussing monstrous births, in which the child's body is rendered 'an improper shape'. Conception is like metal-working: Nature, like an artist, can only work with good material: 'the most ingenious artist can bring nothing to perfection, if his Materials be bad'. If the base metal is impure or unclean, or the receiving vessels, are 'Oblique, and full of windings, not well joynted, the Corners set awry, and full of Chinks or Plates; ...it is apparent that Men cast ill-shaped Figures' (41-42). The strong implication is that either poor matter or a poor vessel is the cause of deformities.

³⁹ See Boutilier, 22-23, quoting John Sadler, *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-glasse* (London, 1636), 12, 119. This inconsistency was present in much older texts: Raynald stated that man is 'principall moouer and cause of ye generation...[but] the chylde owith moost his generation to the

Footnote(s) continued on following page(s)

Whether or not women have seed, therefore, male seed is the most important element in forming the child. Men and women are both essential to conception because, even if she has seed, a woman is unable to conceive without a man; and a man is unable to conceive by himself, because he lacks a womb. But possibly, a woman's imagination might assist in creating a conception that is not 'lawful', in Crooke's terms, or which occurs through the lascivious imagination of the woman (*Aristotle's Master-Piece*, 45-46).

The language of Leontes in Act 1, scene 2, when he speaks of women as ponds to be fished or sluiced, suggests that he favours the more passive role for women, although he also recognises that Hermione contributed blood to nourish Mamillius in the womb, although she did not nurse him (2.1.58-60).⁴⁰ When Leontes conceives that Hermione is unfaithful, he transforms his brain into a womb, which operates independently from his will so that he cannot control it, and into which he pours his suspicions, as if he has raped his mind. As a man, he imposes his own form on events and what he believes to be the conduct of Hermione and Polixenes and it grows in his mind, on matter which he also creates. I have argued in the preceding section that, once deluded, Leontes acts like a person possessed by the mother, almost as if he did have a womb. But if he has been transformed into a woman, his conception is unnatural because women cannot conceive without the help of a man. Either as a man or as a woman his conception is contrary to the basic principle that 'a double creature' was necessary for procreation and not one creature but two separate creatures, one male and one female. Leontes, when he becomes the unnatural creature that begets in itself, becomes a creature which combines the genitals of a man and of a woman, a hermaphrodite, one of the kinds of monster described by Crooke (299-300) and Sharp (115). He also becomes the incarnation of jealousy itself, so that, as well as filling the roles of both parents, he is the product of his misconception.⁴¹

What Leontes conceives in his mind is monstrous. As discussed in the previous chapter, medical authorities distinguished carefully between various types of false pregnancies, the true mole and the various kinds of false mole (Guillemeau, 13-14). However, the mole was also called a 'Moon-calfe' which could also mean 'a misshapen birth' (to 1610), and 'a congenital idiot; a born fool' (from 1620).⁴² Sharp

mother', due to the provision of nourishment in the womb, the pain of labour and the 'conference of most matter in begetting' (Boutilier, 23-24, quoting Raynalde, *The Byrth of Mankynde*, Sig. D3^v).

⁴⁰ As noted, Paster considers the role of breast-feeding of great significance in *The Winter's Tale* and that Leontes's jealousy is related to the practice of wet-nursing, so that he and Polixenes can be compared to 'twin lambs' competing for same maternal breast (264). For my purposes, when Leontes mentions nursing, in the context of 'too much blood', what is important is what women contribute to a foetus in terms of matter. Leontes recognises that women contribute more matter after birth, although in the case of Mamillius a different woman carried out the role of nursing. The implication is that Leontes does not consider that Mamillius could have been contaminated by the wet-nurse. I commented above on the way in which Leontes and the courtiers universalise women's dishonesty when they discuss Hermione but this is not supported by Leontes's words about nursing.

⁴¹ Orgel discusses the jealousy of Leontes as a self-generated monster, and compares it to Othello's, noting that Emilia is accurate when she says that: 'jealous souls.../ They are not ever jealous for the cause,/ But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster/ Begot upon itself, born on itself' (*Othello*, Norton Shakespeare, 2091-2174, 3.4.154-157), Orgel, 17-22, at 19.

⁴² See *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 1352. It also meant 'a mooning absent-minded person, (1613).

tends to obliterate the distinction between false pregnancies and monstrous births when she speaks of 'Moles, and Monsters, distorted, imperfect, ill qualified Children...' (109) and describes other forms of unnatural conception which, unlike moles, had life: creatures like 'Toades, Mice, Serpents...' (111). Sharp describes how she 'knew one [a woman] there myself [in the Low Countries], which was after her childbirth delivered of two like Serpents, and both run away into the Burg wall, as the women supposed' (111). *Des Monstres et prodiges*, Parés work on monstrosities, included a drawing of a 'child with a live snake eating its back', subsequently described as a 'serpent in a fetus' and another of a monster with the face of a frog.⁴³

Various reasons were put forward for monstrosities. Marie-Hélène Huet describes, in *Monstrous Imagination*, how the idea that woman herself was an error or mistake led to the proposition that, 'the female appears to be destined by nature to contribute more figures of dissimilarity, if not creatures even more monstrous' (3). The woman's imagination played an important role. In *Of the Generation of Man*, Paré tells of an Ethiopian Queen who bore a white child and who confessed that, during intercourse she thought on 'a marvellous white thing' (888). Sharp repeats a famous story of a woman who bore a child 'all hairy like a camel, because she usually said prayers kneeling before the image of *St. John Baptist* who was clothed with camels hair' (118). Leontes dwells on a deformed monstrous image of Hermione, as the lover of Polixenes, which grows in his brain so that he brings into being, a figure swollen with the child of Polixenes, poisonous and evil, like the spider in the cup.

The foetus of a woman who was simultaneously pregnant with a snake, toad or poisonous spider would have been in great danger of being devoured.⁴⁴ A mole cannot develop into anything that can have proper life but Sharp tells how moles are sometimes 'bred with the Child, and then is the Child in great danger to be opprest by them' (107). 'If the Child be conceived with a Mole, it draws the nourishment from the Child' (108). As the false conception of Leontes grows in his mind it oppresses his natural love for the child that will be Perdita.

Browne describes how the womb:

which some have called another animal within us and is not subjected to the law of our will after reception of its proper tenant may receive a strange and spurious inmate. (150)

Leontes believes that a womb is a space over which men cannot exercise proper control, a space that 'will let in and out the enemy/ With bag and baggage' (1.2.206-207). There is a convergence here between Jorden's description of the failure of the will to control the internal faculties of the brain, once 'the Mother' takes over (Sig. E') and Thomas Browne's idea that the womb is an independent being, not subject to the control of the will and unable, when pregnant, to keep out the 'strange and spurious matter'. Whether he suffers an attack of 'the mother' or becomes subject to a false or monstrous pregnancy engendered in his mind, Leontes describes what is in the process of occurring to him. Women's wombs and minds are identical and cannot be controlled. Leontes refers to the bawdy planet but there is no point in a barricade, if the enemy is within.

⁴³ See Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination*, 11.

⁴⁴ The woman to whom Sharp refers, who bore the snakes, gave birth to them three months after she delivered of a child, apparently uninjured (111).

'I'll make the statue move indeed'

Critics have likened Hermione's reappearance in *The Winter's Tale*, after an interval of sixteen years, to a form of birth, with Paulina as midwife (Neely, 207). Neely argues that:

The moment of reunion [between Leontes and Hermione] is as painful, laborious, and exhilarating as the moment of birth. Both Hermione and Leontes must experience constriction, separation and transformation. (206)

In all the romances, Neely says, 'birth's painful separations are symbolically transmuted into ecstatic rebirth, and incest's destructive inversions of family bonds are metamorphosed into mutually regenerating intimacies' (190-191).

In this process of rebirth, Paulina can certainly be compared to a midwife. But the womb where Hermione has waited for sixteen years is her tomb, a comparison suggested by Paulina. When Hermione is recovering from her confinement in prison, Paulina says of the baby: 'The child was prisoner to the womb, and is/ By law and process of great nature thence/ Freed and enfranchised' (2.2.62-64). As in *Measure for Measure*, the links between the confinement of childbirth and confinement in a prison, demonstrate a denial of normal expectations about childbirth as a time when women are protected. The link also evokes Paster's suggestion that confinement was not so much to protect the woman as to keep her contaminating influences from infecting the rest of the household, thus closer to containment or quarantine than to protection for the mother. But Paster also suggests the alternative argument, that 'Leontes may imprison Hermione and disenfranchise her, but once her labor has begun he cannot prevent the prison being reconstituted as a birthing chamber or the delivery of Hermione's baby from taking place' (270). Thus, although the 'play inscribes a symbolic contest over childbirth...the result of that contest is left indeterminate' (271).

As a midwife to the eventually-to-be-reborn Hermione, Paulina operates in secrecy and the pregnancy remains invisible. She is a widow and respectable but Leontes describes her in terms of the negative stereotypes of midwives. He calls her 'mankind witch!' (2.3.68), 'intelligencing bawd' (2.3. 69) and 'gross hag' (2.3.108). Whatever the historical reality, as demonstrated by the work of Dorothy Evenden and David Harley, as discussed in the Introduction, the play demonstrates a link between midwives and witches and a resentment of women who try to take control. If the analogy of rebirth is taken further, so that Paulina is also regarded as mother and father of the reborn Hermione, despite Paulina's denial that she is assisted by 'wicked powers' (5.3.90-91), the process is unnatural for much the same reasons as Leontes's false conception, in that Paulina has no man to assist her conception. There is a hint of something that has taken place between herself and Hermione which implies the conception without men which *Aristotle's Master-Piece* describes in obscure terms and Crooke denies, only to distinguish it from lawful activity. Paulina commands 'those that think it is unlawful business,/ I am about, let them depart' (5.3.96-97) and says to Leontes: 'Her actions shall be as holy as/ You hear my spell is lawful' (5.3.104-105). Leontes confirms that what has taken place is lawful when he says: 'O, she's warm!/ If this be magic, let it be an art/ Lawful as eating' (5.3.109-111).

Conceived secretly, and trapped in the womb for sixteen years, Hermione also resembles the 'stone baby' which I discussed in the previous chapter. However, she does regain full life as all her human qualities are restored. What mainly

distinguishes Paulina's pregnancy from that of Leontes is that he conceives a monstrosity and Paulina conceives beauty. But unlike a normal child, Hermione does not start out on a full life, so that what is born is wondrous but mainly because it is unusual, compared with the absolute perfection of the baby Perdita.

A different way of conceptualising Hermione's rebirth is as a theatrical presentation of which Hermione is the star, Leontes, Camillo and Perdita are also players and Paulina plays a major role as author, stage manager and presenter. Her competence as a presenter of a theatrical event can be compared with that of Leontes in Act 1, scene 2, especially in the way she appears to control the effect of visual imagery and speech. Where Leontes lost control of the performance when he asked Hermione to speak without first thinking through what her words might achieve, Paulina exercises a powerful control over the performance, as I will discuss below.

Paulina demonstrates the development of awe and wonder by inviting the audience to become emotionally involved and then deferring their understanding of what takes place. For example, she praises them for their silence: 'it the more shows off/ Your wonder' (5.3.21), and immediately calls on them to speak: 'But yet speak—first you, my liege' (5.2.21-22). She establishes first the visual similarity to Hermione, but aged appropriately, at the age she would be now (5.3.30-32), and then moves the audience through recognition of various possible signs of life. Leontes notes 'that those veins/ Did verily draw blood?' (5.3.64-65). Polixenes notes 'the very life seems warm upon her lip' (5.3.66). Leontes sees 'motion' in her eye (5.3.67). Her technique is to apologise for upsetting Leontes and to offer to cover up the statue to alleviate his distress (5.3.59 and 5.3.82), and then immediately move on to suggest a further sign of life: that the statue might move (5.3.61) or that it lives (5.3.70). She then states that she could 'afflict' Leontes further (5.3.74-75). Leontes now feels 'an air come from' the statue: 'Let no man mock me,/ For I will kiss her' (5.3.79). Again Paulina asks for patience, lest the statue be damaged. Leontes tells her:

What you can make her do
I am content to look on; what to speak,
I am content to hear; for 'tis as easy
To make her speak as move. (5.3.91-94)

Paulina builds up the level of the performance with music. She commands Hermione to be 'stone no more' (5.3.99) and Hermione descends. As Leontes touches Hermione, and feels that she is warm, Paulina commands him to give his hand to Hermione, who embraces him and 'hangs around his neck' (5.3.113). In the giving of her hand to her husband and in hanging around his neck, there are reminders of Act 1, scene 2, when she gave her hand to Polixenes and Leontes saw her as hanging round his neck 'like her medal'. Hermione is thus dramatically restored to the proper place of a queen at the side of her husband. But Camillo asks: 'If she pertain to life, let her speak too' suggesting that performances without words are inadequate (5.3.114). Hermione speaks only to Perdita and seeks an account of how she survived: 'Tell me mine own,/ Where hast thou been preserved? Where lived? How found/ Thy father's court?' (5.3.123-126), making it clear that she preserved herself only in the hope of seeing Perdita and distancing herself from Leontes by the reference to 'thy father's court' while reasserting that Leontes is Perdita's father. At this stage, Paulina's production is complete.

The similarity of the statue scene to a masque has been noted by many scholars, as has the link between popular theatre and masques, through the reference to the satyrs who dance in *The Winter's Tale* during the May Day celebrations in Bohemia, in Act

4, scene 4. The words: 'One three of them by their own report, sir, hath danced before the King' (4.4.323-324), may refer to Jonson's *Masque of Oberon*, performed at court in January 1611.⁴⁵ Holderness notes how reference to the professions of the dancers in real life: 'three carters, three shepherds, three neatherds, three swineherds, that have made themselves all men of hair. They call themselves saltiers...' (4.4.311-313), is a reminder that the 'common men' who are performers at a festive performance in fictional Bohemia are also actors at a performance in historical London (228). When Perdita and Polixenes debate the relative merits of art and nature, he argues, Perdita, although she does not know it, is not a shepherdess acting the role of princess but the reverse. The effect is not to reduce the dramatic fiction to a courtly fantasy, nor simply to merge diverse forms of theatre. Holderness argues that *The Winter's Tale* is prepared to use the conventions of court theatre but it does so to problematise masculine authority and thus endorses the power of women. While it uses the machinery of the masque, the statue scene is contained within a production for the popular theatre and cannot therefore be read as a validation of the masque form over the creations in the popular theatre (230-235).

But *The Winter's Tale* might be said to give new life to the masque form by adding the power and sense of wonder that can only derive from a more developed theatrical situation.⁴⁶ The scene does, as Holderness argues, partly validate the power of women. When Paulina stresses that she is not 'assisted/ By wicked powers' (5.3.90-91), anxieties about midwives as witches can be seen to be linked to an anxiety about women in the theatre. Her production, described by Holderness as 'The Masque of the Statue' (234), is a success in its own right but especially compared with the melodrama of Leontes: 'The Spider in the Cup'. One potential reading of the statue scene is that there is a place for women in the drama and not simply as silent performers.⁴⁷ In *The Winter's Tale*, women's speech has been attacked by Leontes, and implicitly by other characters like Antigonus. A previous attempt by Paulina to stage manage a scene with Leontes, in which he will recognise the baby as his own, has been a failure. Now she manages a performance and her success comes through her ability to focus the attention of her audience on what she wants them to see.

However moving, Paulina's production does not change the structure of the world of the court. Polixenes has demanded that Hermione 'make it manifest where she has lived...' (5.3.115). As they leave the stage, Hermione having said no more, Leontes commands Paulina to lead them to where they :

...may leisurely
Each one demand and answer to his part
Performed in this wide gap of time since first
We were dissevered. (5.3.153-156)

⁴⁵ See 4.4.323-324, fns 4 and 5; Pafford, Arden *The Winter's Tale*, 4.4.327-328 and fn.; Holderness, 228; Orgel, 4.4.333 and 337, fns.

⁴⁶ See Orgel, 57-62.

⁴⁷ James I's Queen, was noted for her close interest and participation in masques. She has been likened by Orgel to Paulina, the 'mankind witch', (*Impersonations*, 83-85), in the context of the Queen's riding costume. The Queen was painted, in a 1617 portrait, in a broad-brimmed hat, a pointed doublet and yellow ruffs. In later performances of *The Winter's Tale*, after Anne had moved to her separate establishment, Paulina, the mankind witch with an interest in theatre, might have reminded audiences of Anne herself.

The degree of leisure can be guessed by his last words: 'Hastily lead away' (5.3.156). Not only does Leontes have the last word, with its expectation that he can demand a full explanation of Hermione's doings when absent, he also reasserts his power by summarily arranging a marriage between Paulina and Camillo (5.3.136-147).

Pregnancy in *The Winter's Tale* is thus complex in its meanings. Although Hermione is vindicated and the suspicions of Leontes are unjustified, the most abiding images of human pregnancy in *The Winter's Tale* generate anxiety. Hermione's pregnancy is the focus for the doubts of Leontes and the effect of his doubts is to allow the significance of her pregnancy to slip. What was honest and benign becomes false and corrupt through the operations of his mind. The child Hermione bears is perfect, so to that extent her pregnancy is successful, but because of the irrational suspicions of Leontes, she is denied her role as queen and mother and loses one child forever. Her pregnancy demonstrates that it is always possible for a chaste woman to be wrongly accused and even her supporters use language that universalises the weakness and deceptiveness of women. Misogynistic men in the audience could have found confirmation for the need to watch their wives closely and mistrust them. Women could have interpreted the play as confirming the need for caution even when their husbands ordered them to speak out.

Although Hermione's pregnancy results in a normal birth, her condition invites the examination of Leontes's behaviour in terms of figurative procreation. His disorder can be compared to 'the mother', a hysterical disease affecting women, and sometimes men, in which the sufferer is choked by emanations from the womb. His misconception about the behaviour of Hermione and Polixenes is like an abnormal pregnancy. What he conceives is monstrous because he takes the role of father and mother, so that the issue cannot be normal. Early modern medical authorities, while stating that human generation requires the participation of both sexes, displayed anxiety about the causes of false pregnancies and monstrous births, understood to be largely caused by the mother's imagination. Thus, although Leontes is a man, his behaviour is identifiably women's behaviour, of a most uncontrolled and erratic kind.

In the statue scene, Hermione is reborn in the second figurative pregnancy in *The Winter's Tale* and what is reborn is beautiful, a creature that breathes, moves, speaks, is 'warm', and in no way monstrous. But the rebirth does not alter the structure of a patriarchal kingdom and, as the play ends, Leontes reasserts his power. As a theatrical event, the statue scene asserts the miraculous capacity of theatre to inspire awe and wonder if performances are handled correctly and if audiences accept what is presented to them in the right spirit. It also suggests a role for women in theatrical performances. Despite its vindication of theatre, the statue scene does not overcome the negative images of pregnancy, as a dangerous time for the mother, and also a state linked to erratic behaviour (even when, as in the case of Leontes, the 'pregnant woman' is a man).

The pregnant boy in *The Winter's Tale*

I commented in the Introduction that *The Winter's Tale* has attracted some scholarly comments about the performance of Hermione by a boy. Lynn Enterline reads Hermione's 'it shall scarce boot me / to say "Not guilty"' in the trial scene (3.2.23-24), as a reference back to the same words used by Polixenes when describing the innocence with which he and Leontes operated in the days before they knew women. Hermione's refusal to speak the words has the effect of turning Leontes's court into a

mockery, defining him as a tyrant (34-35). But, Enterline argues, 'the echoing of "Not guilty" across the play turns the female *voice*, too, into another mark of transgression' (34), with metatheatrical implications, to remind the audience that Hermione is a wronged queen and an actor (36-37). On a transvestite stage, the reminder is that the voice speaking is that of a boy actor (38). The 'hollowness or duality of "her" voice...mirrors a division internal to the play's representation of gender', so that what is represented is 'a "travesty" of womanhood, a femininity-effect rather than a revelation of anything essential to what it continues to call the female tongue' (38). I would argue that the 'effect' is even more complex than Enterline suggests, insofar as Hermione's 'femininity' is split between the queen whose virtue is asserted by the oracle, and the woman representing all women, whose trustworthiness is always in question.

The Winter's Tale places emphasis on the body of Hermione from very early in the play, for example when Leontes speaks of 'no barricado for a belly'. Most scholars agree that her pregnancy is visible, even before it is confirmed in Act 2, scene 1. Neely, for example, identifies an emphasis on Hermione's pregnancy through 'insistent innuendo': 'Nine changes', 'burden filled up,' 'perpetuity', 'multiply', 'breed', and argues that Hermione is 'visibly very pregnant' (192). Erickson also believes that 'Hermione's pregnancy, which is very visible...in and of itself acts as a provocation to male insecurity' (148).⁴⁸

In Act 2, scene 1, after Hermione's pregnancy is established clearly, Leontes draws attention to her appearance and the nature of the sexual act that has made her thus. When Hermione treats what he says as 'sport', he comments:

Away with him, and let her sport herself,
With that she's big with for 'tis Polixenes
Has made thee swell thus. (2.1.60-64)

He also draws attention to the physical nature of her role in the birth of Mamillius, in providing blood to nourish him (2.1.58-59), and to her breasts by his comment that she did not nurse him (2.1.57). In the trial scene, when Hermione says she has been denied the normal childbirth rituals, she indicates the abnormality, in social terms, of what is taking place, but her words also reinforce the nature of the physical trial the woman character has recently undergone.

In early performances, these reminders of the physical aspects of Hermione's pregnancy would have provided reference points to the boy who played her and thus

⁴⁸ Paster does not discuss Hermione's appearance in Act 1, scene 2 but argues that, in Act 2, scene 1, when Hermione's ladies discuss her pregnancy, '...we learn retrospectively, the duration of Polixenes' visit and Hermione's pregnancy coincide' (270). I do not read her discussion as a statement that Hermione does not look pregnant in Act 1, scene 2, but simply that when the imminence of the birth is made clear by her ladies, more weight attaches to the words 'nine phases of the watery star' in the earlier scene. Paster discusses the change in *The Winter's Tale* from *Pandosto*, Shakespeare's source, in which the Queen, Bellaria, discovers she is pregnant in prison. See Robert Greene's *Pandosto, The Triumph of Time*, first published in 1588, is reprinted in Orgel (ed.), *The Winter's Tale*, Appendix B, 234-274. Neville Coghill explains Leontes's sudden jealousy by arguing that Hermione is 'visibly pregnant', thus giving immediate visual meaning to Polixenes's 'watery star' reference, and that when Polixenes says he is 'standing in rich place' (1.2.6) he means that he stands by the side of Hermione. 'Who can fail to wonder whether the man so amicably addressing this expectant mother may not be the father of her child? See, 'Six Points of Stage-Craft', Kenneth Muir (ed. and intro), *Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale: A Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 198-231, at 201.

strengthened the overall sense that pregnancy is outside the realms of proof. Hermione's pregnancy is judged by the oracle to have been true, but the boy actor would have tended to reinstate pregnancy as a condition that cannot be known or judged with certainty. Leontes questions the sexual honesty of Hermione, as a woman like all other women. Her sexual honesty then becomes linked to the moral honesty of her pregnancy, which Leontes denounces. Antigonus says in defence of Hermione that 'every inch of woman in the world/ Ay, every dram of woman's flesh is false/ If she be' (2.1.139-141). When Hermione was played by a boy, the woman's flesh that had just left the stage, in the person of Hermione on her way to prison, was false because it was boy's flesh. The implication of the boy actor was thus partly to work against the oracle, to make it more likely that all women were false and that all pregnancies should be treated with suspicion.

I suggest that in the first half of the play, when Hermione is pregnant or has just given birth, audience recognition of the boy actor would have come in flickers. The power of the drama required the audience to accept Hermione as a pregnant woman and a queen, and as honest and chaste. The reference points would have intruded sufficiently on that acceptance to reinforce pregnancy as a condition that cannot be known or judged, with an intense oscillation between the character and the boy.

When Hermione appears in the second half of the play, her pregnancy is remembered as the cause of Leontes's jealousy but there are no references to remind the audience of the physical aspects of conception or birth. During the statue scene, audience attention is drawn to the figure of Hermione as a beautiful, if aging woman, beyond childbearing. Paster argues: 'The mother who returns is a mother whom the child's absence has spared the further indignities of reproduction...' (277). Adelman notes that: 'Hermione herself can only return when she is past childbearing, her dangerous generativity bequeathed to the next generation' (236). Thus, while it is impossible to forget earlier images of Hermione, as the pregnant woman who holds up her hand to Polixenes, and as the queen on trial who has just given birth, the reborn Hermione is desexualised. In any case, Paulina's strategy of presenting her as reborn casts Hermione as the child, rather than the mother. Paulina's insistence on the lawfulness of what takes place might possibly hint at something unlawful that has taken place in secret between the two women which, if emphasised, could draw attention to the boys playing both women. But the references go for nothing.

I suggest that what Paulina stresses as 'lawful' is theatre, especially the use of boys to play women. One reading of the statue scene is to point out the contrast between true theatre and the monstrous theatre presented in the writings of the antitheatricalists. If the audience at an early performance noted the boy actor playing Hermione in the statue scene, because of reminders of the boy in the first half of the play, it was as a contrast to that boy. Filtered through the diseased mind of Leontes, that boy gave birth to monstrous thoughts leading to unhappiness and death. Members of the early modern audience knew in their minds that the boy actor could not possibly be pregnant, just as they knew that Hermione was not a statue coming to life. When Paulina tells her on-stage audience: 'It is required/ you do awake your faith' (5.3.94-95), I suggest that one area requiring faith was that a boy could play a woman without danger.

John Rainolds, in a frequently quoted passage, had likened the kiss of boy actors to the sting of poisonous spiders, which 'if they doe but touch men onely with their mouth, they put them to wonderfull paine and make them madde, so beautifull boyes [said Rainolds] by kissing doe sting and powre secretly in a kind of poyson, the

poysen of incontinenzie....'⁴⁹ At the theatre, the poison is transmitted simply by watching the boy players. The effect on those who watch is dramatic:

...can wise men be perswaded that there is no wantonnesse in the
players partes, when experience sheweth...that...senses are
mooved, affections are delited, heartes though strong and constant
are vanquished by such players? that an effeminate stage-player,
while hee faineth love, imprinteth wounds of love?

When Leontes equates 'seeing' with 'knowledge', he adopts the image of the spider in the cup. Had he not seen the spider, he could have remained unharmed but, knowing it was there, he allowed himself to 'see' it and this constituted an act of love-making which poisoned his mind and led to his false conception. At the metatheatrical level, what Leontes allowed himself to 'see', I suggest, was the fact that Hermione was played by a boy.

In *The Winter's Tale*, physical pregnancy is presented as a condition that is not susceptible to proof. It is not vindicated by the oracle, partly because the physical pregnancy in the play was presented on the body of a boy. Nor are the uncertainties and anxieties associated with physical pregnancy neutralised by the statue scene. But there are suggestions to an early modern audience that, to get the full benefit from theatre, they should disregard the metatheatrical in favour of suspending disbelief, ignore the monstrous thoughts of the antitheatricalists and give themselves over to the full enjoyment of the experience. In true theatre, *The Winter's Tale* suggests, boys can play women, even pregnant women, and pregnant boys can produce perfect babies, like Perdita, also played by boys, as long as the audience obeys Paulina's imperative to 'awake its faith'.

Ironically, the playing of Paulina by a boy would have tended to reduce the implication in the text that there might be scope for women to take a more active role in theatre.

⁴⁹ Rainoldes, *Th' overthrow of Stage-Playes*, 18.

Chapter Four

Pregnancy as Production: *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

In Thomas Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, there are a number of pregnancies, all of which involve extramarital sexual activity in defiance of early seventeenth century moral precepts.¹ The play is distinctive because its main focus is human reproduction, from conception to the christening of a child, as part of a process of commercial production and theatrical representation. *A Chaste Maid* is radical in its approach to major legal, moral and social issues in that it shows a society in which, while some characters speak as if they had regard to them, their actions demonstrate that they are motivated solely by commercial considerations.

There has not been a great deal of recent scholarly analysis of *A Chaste Maid*. Loughrey and Taylor comment on the relationship between money and sex (xvii-xviii).² Two strikingly different points of view can be found in the work of Gail Kern Paster and Alicia Anna Boutilier. Paster examines urinary incontinence in *A Chaste Maid* as 'a virtual symptomatology of woman, which insists on the female body's moisture, secretions, and productions as shameful tokens of uncontrol....most striking in the christening scene...it is present from the very beginning...when Mrs. Yellowhammer diagnoses her weeping daughter's languor [evidenced in her tears] as greensickness and prescribes a husband as the appropriate therapy'.³ Boutilier argues that Middleton's use of illegitimately pregnant characters shows how 'the pregnant woman can exert subversive power by exploiting and manipulating the ideologies surrounding her pregnancy....'⁴

I do not propose to devote much time to assessing the legal or moral implications of individual actions or the tensions in early seventeenth century society about marriage formation or marital fidelity, which I have discussed in previous chapters. The play presents women as loose, linking sexual, verbal and urinary incontinence but it also comments harshly on male sexual behaviour and the role of men as husbands and fathers. There are reminders of class differences, and London is contrasted with the surrounding country-side, but the flouting of social and moral rules extends across all ranks and kinds, in the country as well as London itself. Members of society who might be expected to adopt higher moral standards, for example the Yellowhammers, are shown as no different, in their attitude to their children, to the Wench who hides her baby in a basket of meat. The point is not to exonerate the Wench but to demonstrate that the Yellowhammers are no better than she is.

¹ *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* was written c. 1611-1613 but not published until later (London: 1630; rpt. Menston, Eng. Scolar Press, 1969). The 1630 quarto states on the title-page that the play 'hathe been often acted at the Swan on the Bank-side by the Lady Elizabeth her Servants'. *A Chaste Maid* is described as 'the only play definitely known to have been staged [at the Swan]' and scholars believe that this must have been between 1611-1613 (Andrew Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 398). All quotations are from Brian Loughrey and Neil Taylor (eds and intro.), *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays*, (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 161-238.

² On this point, see also Alan Brissenden (ed. and intro.), *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, (London: Ernest Benn, 1968), xi-xxvi, at xvi. Brissenden notes the commercial basis of all the sexual encounters in the play (xvi). See also, David L. Frost (ed. and intro.), *The Selected Plays of Thomas Middleton* (Cambridge, London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), x-xii. Frost comments that at times in *A Chaste Maid* 'invention becomes liberated well-nigh entirely from moral intent' (xii).

³ *The Body Embarrassed*, 52-63, at 52.

⁴ 'The Surer Side', 102. See generally, 27-47.

Perhaps because of this levelling impulse, where those of higher rank are shown to be no better than the low, the text does not concentrate on the double standard for men and women in matters of sexuality or on differences in the application of the law or the different operation of cultural constraints between the rich and the poor. But there are occasional hints at the dark realities of illicit sexuality in early modern London: the likelihood that women, rather than men, will be brought before the courts for adultery; the consequences for a poor woman whose fornication is exposed through pregnancy, especially if the child's father is married and cannot marry her; the virtual impossibility for a single woman of keeping an illegitimate child; and the possibility that if such a child dies, the mother will be charged with infanticide.

A Chaste Maid is set in Cheapside, a main commercial thoroughfare, once noted for its splendid row of goldsmiths' shops. The play's title is a pun on the fact that prostitutes were 'chac'd', that is whipped, along the length of the street, but Laura Gowing notes that, although *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* is supposed to be an oxymoron, the inhabitants of Cheapside were not 'especially likely to be accused of whoredom or prosecuted for keeping bawdy houses'.⁵ Most of the characters emerge from their illicit sexuality without suffering any untoward results (Sir Walter's downfall relates not to his keeping of the Allwits but to his desire to marry Moll Yellowhammer). The play does not condone their attitude or their behaviour. It suggests that, if moral standards are to be upheld, this will not take place in early seventeenth century London where the only issue of concern is production and consumption.⁶ The conversion of human flesh into produce through sexual commerce, both licensed and unlicensed, is driven home by constant references linking human and animal flesh and sexuality. For example, Maudline Yellowhammer tells her daughter: 'A husband! Had not such a piece of flesh been ordained, what had us wives been good for?' (1.1.4-6). Touchwood senior says of Lady Kix, who berates her husband because they are childless:

I hold my life she's in deep passion
For the imprisonment of veal and mutton
Now kept in garrets, weeps for some calf's head now;
Methinks her husband's head might serve, with bacon. (2.1.121-124)

When Sir Walter arrives with the Welsh gentlewoman, Touchwood junior says: 'My knight.../Is come and brought up his ewe mutton/ To find a ram at London' (1.1.130-132). The play also relies on the ambiguity of words like 'get' and 'business', to link the gathering of profits and the begetting of children. I have said that the play condemns the behaviour of both men and women. In doing so, it implies that men should be criticised for seeking only to beget gold. Close attention to bodily excretions, such as urine, are a reminder that excrement also can have a commercial

⁵ See Act 1, scene 1, fn. re 'Cheapside'. Gowing describes an account of women who had abandoned infant children and were 'tied unto a cart's tail and whipped with rods naked in Newgate Market Cheapside Leadenhall and in the borough of Southwark having several proclamations openly made at every of the said four places declaring their several offences', "'The freedom of the streets": women and social space, 1560-1640', *Londinopolis*, 130-151, at 141, and 150, fn. 46, quoting Corporation of London Record Office, Rep. 20, fo. 47^v. On the comment that inhabitants of Cheapside were not especially likely to be prosecuted for sexual offences, see 146.

⁶ Puritan women are shown up as incontinent and greedy. A parson takes part in the mock funeral for Moll Yellowhammer and Touchwood Junior, which is transformed into their marriage ceremony. But the major assistance they receive in deceiving Moll's parents is from Susan the maid, so that the church is treated as not significantly different from a chambermaid.

value. The message thus seems to be that gold is no different to excrement, neither better nor worse. Unfortunately, what is also implied is that what women produce in childbirth is itself no better than excrement.

Another radical feature of *A Chaste Maid* is that it links procreation and theatre, not because both are forms of creativity, but because both involve performances that can lead to profits or losses. Jean-Christophe Agnew examines similarities between the themes of commerciality and theatricality, despite the fact that people experienced them as two separate worlds. He starts by noting the obvious differences between the market and the theatre:

Market and theater. What different meanings these two words evoke....Reality and fiction. Materialism and symbolism. Necessity and freedom. Work and play. What are these terms but variants of the pairing of market and theater? And how else to think of them except as worlds apart?⁷

A Chaste Maid shows how easy it is to confuse the two.

My focus in this chapter is to examine procreation in *A Chaste Maid* as a commercial activity and, through this connection, to explore its links to theatre. I first examine the Allwits' complex family relationships with Sir Walter Whorehound, as commercial activities and as a performance, and then make comparisons with the households of Touchwood senior and his wife and Sir Oliver and Lady Kix, and the situation(s) of the Wench, or Wenches, with illegitimate babies.⁸ I then examine the christening scene and the treatment of female speech and urinary incontinence as a form of bodily evacuation, similar to childbirth. I adopt the same pattern as in earlier chapters. I examine pregnancy as acted in *A Chaste Maid* first and do not discuss the relevance of the boy actors until a separate section at the end of the chapter.

'Honesty wash my eyes, I have spied a wittol'

In this section I examine the performance by Allwit of the roles of 'wittol' and father. When Sir Walter arrives in London he visits the house of the Allwits. As a member of the landed gentry, Sir Walter's dealings with a family like the Allwits can only involve trade, not social activity, and it is soon clear that Sir Walter does more than take rooms with the Allwits when he visits London. Master Allwit lives, at Sir Walter's expense, with Mistress Allwit and their reputed children. Sir Walter's man, Davy, exclaims: 'Honesty wash my eyes, I have spied a wittol' (1.2.1), 'a complaisant cuckold'.⁹ The servants refer to Sir Walter as their master: 'Is our master come?' (1.2.60). They tell Allwit: 'O you are but our mistress's husband' (1.2.64). Allwit removes his hat when Sir Walter arrives as a sign of deference and the servants comment that: 'he's but one peep above a servingman, and so much his horns make him' (1.2.67-68). Allwit's servants despise him because they believe that Mistress Allwit bears Sir Walter's child and is close to term.

⁷ *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), ix-x, at x. Agnew comments on the changing meanings of 'investment' at the beginning of the early seventeenth century, linking 'investiture' in garments denoting office and investment of funds in commercial concerns, 85.

⁸ It is unclear, as discussed below, whether the Wench whose child was fathered by Touchwood senior is the same Wench whose baby is in the basket.

⁹ 1.2.11, fn. 'Wittol' means 'a man who is aware of, and complaisant about the infidelity of his wife; a contented cuckold', *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 2563. 'Cuckold' means 'the husband of an unfaithful wife', *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* Vol. I, 468.

Davy and Allwit's servants reflect an abiding early seventeenth century view that a man whose wife is unfaithful is degraded and a figure of fun, especially if she bears another man's child. In Gowing's words: 'Contemporary ballads bring the humiliations of cuckoldry to a peak with the man who "rockes the Cradle, when the Child's none of his owne"'.¹⁰ Neely states, in relation to the wives in Shakespeare's plays who are wrongly accused of adultery, that what is important about cuckoldry is that it treats wives as possessions, validating their husbands' manhood and honour; it also emphasises the precariousness of that possession, because of women's sexuality and promiscuity.¹¹ If Allwit objected to Sir Walter's attentions to his wife, he could bring a suit for judicial separation on the grounds of adultery but to sue successfully for adultery, witnesses were required, not simply to give evidence of suspicious circumstances but of actual acts (Gowing, 189). In this case, the servants, who would be the most likely witnesses within the Allwit household, rely for their continued employment on the continuation of the adultery; and because Davy wants to keep Sir Walter from marriage to ensure his own inheritance, he also would be unlikely to give evidence (3.2.225-230).

Allwit claims to thrive on being a cuckold: 'The happiest state that ever man was born to' (1.2.21). He boasts that Sir Walter maintains his household:

I thank him, h'as maintained my house this ten years,
Not only keeps my wife, but a keeps me
And all my family; I am at his table,
He gets me all my children, and pays the nurse,
Monthly, or weekly, puts me to nothing,
Rent, nor church duties, not so much as the scavenger....(1.2.15-20)

A typical cuckold is a dupe, too careless of his interests to guard his wife; or at least he turns a blind eye to what may be taking place. When Leontes, in *The Winter's Tale*, mistakenly believes himself to be a cuckold, part of his humiliation stems from the fact that he did not notice what was going on: 'And all eyes/ Blind with the pin and web but theirs; theirs only,/ That would unseen be wicked' (1.2.292-294). A wittol knows about his wife's infidelity and is complaisant. Allwit denies consistently that he is jealous. When he anonymously warns Yellowhammer of Sir Walter's role in the Allwit household, he describes the husband's complacency, in fact his own: 'All's one to him: he feeds and takes his ease,/ Was ne'er the man that ever broke his sleep/ To get a child yet...' (4.1.241-243). His view is atypical. Men in *A Chaste Maid* who speak about Allwit adopt the conventional view of Davy and the servants. Sir Walter calls Allwit a 'slave' (1.2.108); Yellowhammer describes Allwit's situation as 'abominable!' (4.1.230) and a husband who would allow such a situation to continue as 'an incomparable wittol' (4.1.238) and a 'base slave' (4.1.240).

Sir Walter acts as a husband might be expected to act. On arrival after two months absence, he asks: 'What entertainment has lain open here?/ No strangers in my

¹⁰ *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 193.

¹¹ *Broken Nuptials*, 7. Neely comments that in describing cuckoldry, the focus is on the husband and the lover: the woman in the triangular relationship becomes irrelevant; she cannot be cuckolded; and while the husband is a cuckold and the lover is the cuckolder, there is no word to describe the wife (7).

absence?' (1.2.86-87). Servant I replies: 'No living creature entered' (1.2.92).¹² Allwit describes what he sees as the advantages of his own situation, compared to that of Sir Walter:

These torments stand I freed of, I am as clear
 From jealousy of a wife as from the charge:
 O two miraculous blessings! 'Tis the knight
 Hath took that labour all out of my hands:
 I may sit still and play, he's jealous for me,
 Watches her steps, sets spies. I live at ease,
 He has both the cost and torment: when the strings
 Of his heart frets, I feed, laugh or sing... (1.2.48-55)

He imagines the torment of feeding 'the wife plump for another's veins' (1.2.47) and describes himself as laughing 'inward whilst his [Sir Walter's] marrow melts' (1.2.88-89). His powerful description of the sensations of jealousy, linked to his consistent denials, might suggest that he understands the emotion only too well or might have done so once, until he realised the better commercial sense of letting another man suffer the pangs for him. The audience know of Sir Walter's jealousy through Allwit's description. He has another mistress and is engaged in marriage negotiations, so deep love is unlikely to be the cause of his jealousy. He acts more like a husband might be expected to act, in his concern that Mistress Allwit's body be kept closed to other men. His jealousy might be inspired by lust but another implication is that jealousy is part of the emotional baggage of a husband only where he makes a financial investment in his wife.

There are slight hints in the text that Allwit might be the father of his reputed children, making Sir Walter a quasi-cuckold; (a man whose lover deceived him was not a cuckold but Sir Walter's behaviour is closer to that expected of a husband than a lover). If so, while Sir Walter is screwing Mistress Allwit, he is being screwed by the entrepreneurial class. Allwit states ambiguously of Mistress Allwit that 'she's a wife as honest of her body to me as any lord's proud lady can be' (1.2.101-102), to which Sir Walter claims that he knows 'I heard you were once offring to go to bed with her' (1.2.103-104). Allwit may simply make a sarcastic comment about the morality of so-called proud ladies. He may suggest that, as he enjoys the financial benefits, his wife is honest to him, rather than to Sir Walter. Or it might mean that it is Allwit who fathers her children. When the boys, Wat and Nick, call him 'father' in front of Sir Walter, Allwit calls them 'villain' and 'bastard' but states in an aside 'Should he hear 'em!—/These are two foolish children that do not know the gentleman that sits there' (1.2.115-120). Allwit is concerned because, within the household, Sir Walter wants to be identified as the boys' father and anything that makes him doubt his paternity might end the arrangement with Mistress Allwit. Allwit may make a meaningless comment about the children being foolish, along the lines of 'it's a wise child that knows it's own father'. But he might hint that the children do not know Sir Walter as their father because Allwit is their father.

Later, when Allwit tries on one of Sir Walter's suits and asks Davy if it fits him, and Davy replies: 'my master's things were ever fit for you, sir, e'en to a hair', Allwit

¹² There are reminders of *The Winter's Tale* in the ambiguity of words used by Sir Walter: as well as his reference to 'entertainment' which is used by Leontes at 1.2.110, when he ponders Hermione's behaviour with Polixenes, Sir Walter asks the servant to 'satisfy' him—that is, provide proof—but used by Camillo when he explains that Polixenes stayed 'to satisfy the entreaties of your highness' and of Hermione and picked up by Leontes in its sexual sense (1.2.234-235).

responds: 'Thou hast hit it right, Davy./ We ever jump'd in one, this ten years, Davy' (2.3.5-9). The implication is that both Allwit and Sir Walter have been fitted to a hair.¹³ But there are a number of other occasions, when Allwit is alone or with Mistress Allwit, when he speaks of the children as Sir Walter's, notably: 'He gets me all my children' (1.2.18); and 'I would not have thy toil for all thy pleasure' (2.2.57).

There is no doubt that Mistress Allwit is a mother. Her boys appear on stage, she is pregnant and her girl is christened. The paternity of her children is problematic and not simply because it is morally dubious. Under the arrangement between the Allwits and Sir Walter, the role of 'father' is split between Allwit and Sir Walter in a way that highlights the complexity of determining fatherhood. *A Chaste Maid* demonstrates that paternity is not simply a matter of biology nor of nurture. Allwit is the reputed father: the boys call him 'father' and he acts to find gossips for the christening. Sir Walter pays the bills and desires to be known as 'father' by Wat and Nick, yet seeks to deny knowledge of his role outside the household, even to the extent of standing as a gossip, or godfather, to his new daughter: 'The better policy, it prevents suspicion;/ 'Tis good to play with rumour at all weapons' (2.2.36-37). Sir Walter's ambiguous attitude to his role as father stems from the fact that his motives are confused. Davy and the servants in the Allwit household despise Allwit as a wittol and Sir Walter gains in status in their eyes as a man able to impregnate Mistress Allwit and support her family. Conventional early seventeenth century morality demands that Sir Walter avoid paternity except within marriage. The existence of children could also be a disadvantage for Sir Walter in negotiating a marriage. Allwit believes he gains in status through the arrangement with Sir Walter because he has the reputation of a prosperous man, through Sir Walter's support. He also has the name of a wealthy husband and father, through Mistress Allwit's children and the family's display of conspicuous consumption:

I see these things, but like a happy man,
I pay for none, at all, yet fools think's mine;
I have the name, and in his gold I shine;....(1.2.38-40)

Allwit's 'name' might be that of a wealthy man and of a father. Even in Cheapside, his moral name or character does not exist.

In determining paternity in the early seventeenth century, attention was also paid to the child's appearance, as discussed in the previous chapter. The gossips at the feast after the christening discuss the resemblance of Mistress Allwit's baby to its father:

Gossip 2 :....How say you now, Gossip, is't not a chopping girl, so like the father?

Gossip 3: As if it had been spit out of his mouth,
Eyed, nos'd and brow'd as like a girl can be,
Only, indeed, it has the mother's mouth.

Gossip 2: The mother's mouth up and down, up and down.

Gossip 3: 'Tis a large child; she's but a little woman.

Puritan 1:....Well mett'l'd, like the faithful, to endure
Her tribulation here, and raise up seed. (3.2.9-16).

¹³ Loughrey and Taylor suggest that 'hair' implies pubic hair and 'jump'd in one' means 'fucked the same woman'; 2.3.6-7 and 9. fns.

As the gossips think that Allwit is the father, they can detect a 'resemblance' to him, although possibly the child does look like him because it is his child.¹⁴ Paster argues that the gossips regard the baby as a smaller version of themselves: 'because the baby has not been fathered by Allwit, only her resemblance to her mother has a foundation in nature' one which the gossips 'link specifically to the two interchangeable thresholds of female appetite and vulnerability: the baby has her mother's mouth "up and down, up and down"....the question of family resemblance is thoroughly effaced by the constitutive force of gender' (55). I suggest that in this scene, the gossips put forward what can be regarded as stereotypical women's views about parental likeness, in which a girl child's likeness to her mother is significant. For most of the scene, the gossips are presented from Allwit's perspective, because of his comments about them and their typically incontinent woman's behaviour. Their speech here, lacking knowledge about the complexities of paternity in this case, might therefore be regarded as a lot of women running off at the mouth.

In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes considers paternity to be all-important, so that a child begotten to another man is of necessity monstrous. Paternity in *A Chaste Maid* is a much more tenuous concept, which can differ according to discourse and social practice, and which means different things according to biology, law, reputation and financial investment. Further, despite the importance of paternity to men, it is possible that what women find important about a child is not its family situation but its sex. The effect is to break down any distinction between the 'true' father and the 'false' one. In practice, a child's father is the man who has the name of father and who takes on the role.

'He gets me all my children'

In this section, I examine various ways of categorising Mistress Allwit and her children as business opportunities. In *A Chaste Maid*, just as women bear the children and must labour to give birth to them, men must labour or work to beget them. 'Work' can have a specifically sexual meaning: the servants think that Allwit is 'out of work' because he is supplanted by Sir Walter in Mistress Allwit's bed (1.2.58). The Wet Nurse says to Allwit about the new baby girl: 'Tis the best piece of work that e'er you did' (2.2.23). The man's 'work' also includes the provision of financial resources and other contributions, both physical and emotional. As discussed in the previous section, the cost of supporting a family and of guarding Mistress Allwit is a financial burden for Sir Walter, from which Allwit is largely free. When Allwit decides to find gossips for the christening, he says: 'That's all the work I'll do' (2.2.2); and when he boasts that being a cuckold is a happy state, he says that Sir Walter 'hath took that labour all out of my hands' (1.2.51). The Wench asks Touchwood senior when she shows him her baby: 'Do you see your workmanship?' (2.1.66). In *Of Domesticall Duties*, William Gouge names '*mutuall providence...about the goods of the family*', as a duty of wives and husbands. They should be 'as prouident as they can be with a good conscience in getting, keeping,

¹⁴ Boutilier notes that 'consistent with the male anxiety concerning paternity in the social tracts,...the father is never distinguishable [identified], but merely flattered' (47). It is not clear whether she means that the gossips are aware that Sir Walter thinks he is the father. He also is present, as a gossip, so that he is available as a basis of comparison. His presence, in my view, adds to the complexity of the split paternity of Allwit and Sir Walter, especially as it is possible that Allwit is the father. But such complexities are for the amusement of the audience, not the gossips who, in my view, think that Allwit is the father.

and disposing competent goods and riches for the mutuall good one of another' (253). Allwit makes it clear that family finances are what most occupy his mind, yet in his boasts about idleness he draws attention to one of the vices named by Gouge as contrary to good providence. I argue below that Allwit works at the profession of playing and thus provides for his family.

Sir Walter is the 'founder' of the Allwit business, which is built on his gold: "'Bless the right worshipful, the good founder's life'" (1.2.14), says Allwit and 'In his gold I shine'. He refers to Sir Walter as if he were a member of one of the 'Worshipful Companies', like the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, located in Goldsmith's Row in Cheapside. John Stow describes the 'ten fair dwelling-houses and fourteen shops, all in one frame, uniformly built four stories high, beautified towards the street...all which is cast in lead, richly painted over and gilt....This said front was again new painted and gilt over in the year 1594'.¹⁵ At the end of the sixteenth century, Goldsmith's Row was known internationally as a symbol of magnificence, both for the glory of the buildings, the valuable goods displayed at the shop fronts and the wealth to be found inside. By 1611, it was beginning to rot and 'strangers' had begun to infiltrate it.¹⁶

Allwit lists the benefits which he, Mistress Allwit and the boys enjoy at Sir Walter's expense. He names the house with its 'waterhouse and windmills', good food, fire in winter, a 'full coal house', a 'steeple made up with Kentish faggots', his wife's 'embossings/, Embroiderings, spanglings....as if she lay with all the gaudy shops/ In Gresham's Bourse about her', her 'restoratives' sufficient 'to set up a young 'pothecary/ And richly stock the foreman of a drug shop', her 'sugar by whole loaves, her wines by rundlets' (1.2.22-37). Gresham's Bourse is the Royal Exchange 'founded by Thomas Gresham in 1566 as a centre of commercial activity' and which contained shops.¹⁷ The house where the Allwits live while they are kept by Sir Walter is like a shop in the Bourse. Allwit's description of the goods is not simply as benefits to be enjoyed but has a commercial tone: the coal is 'five or six chaldrons'.¹⁸ The medicines are described as stock for apothecaries and druggists; the sugar and

¹⁵ Henry B. Wheatley (intro.), *The Survey of London* (London: J. M. Dent and New York: E. P. Dutton, 1912; first published London, 1598, rpt. in 1603), 308-309. Around the time that Middleton wrote *A Chaste Maid*, Anthony Munday presented a pageant for the Goldsmiths, to celebrate the inauguration of Goldsmith as a Lord Mayor. See, *Chruso-thriambos: The Triumph of Gold*, 'Devised and Written by Anthony Mundy'. 500 copies were printed but not produced for sale, simply handed out as souvenirs. The work was privately printed for the Goldsmith's Company in 1962, edited by J. H. P. Pafford. The copy in the Australian National University Library was presented by the Worshipful Co. of Goldsmiths. Munday uses references to procreation, for example: 'And of faire flowers begetteth stinking weedes' (38). Munday had previously written for the stage as a playwright and is believed to be the author of *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters*, another example of a writer who if not writing for the theatre might write against it. Possibly, there are implied references to *Chruso-thriambos* in *A Chaste Maid*. In 1614, Munday had to admit that in naming a Goldsmith as first Lord Mayor, he had mistaken one family member for another and that the distinction should have gone to a Draper, in any case. He was writing at the time for the Drapers (15). Among numerous activities, Munday was a keeper and hirer out of clothing and properties for pageants. He and Middleton collaborated uneasily on later pageants.

¹⁶ Paul Griffiths, 'Politics made visible: order, residence and uniformity in Cheapside, 1600-45', *Londinopolis*, 176-196, esp. 176-180.

¹⁷ See 1.2.34, fn. Stow describes the proclamation of the Bourse as the Royal Exchange in 1570 (173). See *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, 255.

¹⁸ A chaldron is 32 bushels; 1.2.25, fn.

wine come in commercial quantities.¹⁹ The Allwit house is also linked to the Royal Exchange as a site of prostitution. Gowing says that the Exchange was not originally planned for women's transactions, but as a place where merchants could congregate and that its use by women was problematic.²⁰ At night prostitutes used it and illegitimate babies were abandoned there. During the day, a woman who crossed the space might find herself abused (143-144). Once the arrangement with Sir Walter has ceased to be profitable, the Allwits agree to do again 'as we were wont to do....Let's let out lodgings then/ And take a house in the Strand' (5.1.167-169). The implication is that the house will be a bawdy house, so that the sale and consumption of human flesh will continue in a different venue. Allwit names the furnishings they will take with them to the new establishment, for example: 'cloth of tissue cushions,/ To furnish out bay windows' and 'a close-stool of tawny velvet' (5.1.171-175).

Mistress Allwit's 'embossings and embroideries', are inappropriate to a woman of middle rank, if not lower. They constitute a sign of idleness and lax morals, as described by Gouge, who argues that wives can throw their husband into debt by 'gorgeous decking and adorning their houses [and] by braue and costly apparell....' (256). In *A Chaste Maid*, the husband benefits from the arrangement. A sermon preached before James I in 1619, by Dr John Williams, Dean of Salisbury and one of the Chaplains in attendance on the king, denounced certain clothing as excessive, unless worn by the those of high rank.²¹ Dr Williams placed great stress on gold and silk: 'If any man thinke gold an ornament vnto him, hee must needs confesse himselfe, to bee a meaner creature, then is the golde: so say I of all the rest. If he hold it a grace, to haue...the very *excrements* of beasts...the bowels and intrails of *Wormes* to cloathe him...:Why should notthe wormes of the *earth*, bee farre more honourable creatures then that *man*, who by them is thus cloathed in *soft rayments*?' (Sig. D^r-D^v). Silk and velvet, made from the thread extruded from silk worms, a form of excrement, thus furnish the material for adorning Mistress Allwit's body and for containing her excrement.

As the reason for Sir Walter's interest in the family, Mistress Allwit is thus the major asset of the family business of which Sir Walter is the 'founder', as discussed above. As a commodity that can be bought and sold, Mistress Allwit's body can be equated with her clothes and the furniture in Sir Walter's house, and will be moved to the new establishment, as part of a new income-earning endeavour. Her body is like a storehouse for some of the products acquired. It is, itself, like Gresham's Bourse, a place of commercial sexual exchange, an interpretation strengthened by the derivation of Bourse, from 'burse', 'a purse-like sack'.²²

¹⁹ A 'rundlet' of wine is a cask; see 2.1.37, fn.; the description of 'sugar by whole loaves' may imply refinement rather than quantity. Mistress Allwit has recourse to drugs but apparently did not use contraceptives or abortifacients. Both Allwit and Sir Walter are enthusiastic about the children, suggesting that she felt no need to prevent conception. Early seventeenth century contraception is discussed briefly in Chapter One.

²⁰ "'The freedom of the streets'", 143.

²¹ *A Sermon of Apparell, preached before the Kings Maestie and the Prince his Highnesse at Theobalds, the 22. of February, 1619* (London, 1620; rpt. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum and Norwood, N. J.: Walter J. Johnson, 1979, The English Experience series, Vol. 963). Dr Williams preached on the text: 'What went yee out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that beare soft cloathing are in Kings houses.' Matthew 11. Verse 8, Sig. B^r

²² See *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, 255.

Neely argues that the convention of cuckoldry treats wives 'as property....' (7). Allwit certainly treats his wife's body as property but his attitude to this is as extreme as his attitude to cuckoldry. Leontes, in *The Winter's Tale*, likens his wife's womb to a 'pond fished by his next neighbour' (1.2.196), and speaks of the belly which lets 'in and out the enemy' (1.2.206). These imagined breaches are, to Leontes, a clear denial of his ownership. But where Leontes's comparison of Hermione to a pond or a castle is suitable language for a King in a feudal society or a landed proprietor, Allwit's language evokes the commercial environment of London merchants in which property can be the subject of the transaction, the means of paying for it or the site where the transaction is completed. The same sort of comparison was made in 1632: '...the Exchange is "like a beautiful woman, absolutely good, if not too common"'.²³

One of the other items gained by Allwit from the arrangement with Sir Walter is his wife's forthcoming child. After her birth, there are hints that Allwit regards the baby girl as an asset for the future. He describes her as 'a fine, plump, black-eyed slut;' (2.2.14). According to the Wet Nurse she's 'a wench/ Will be a knocker' (2.2.25-26). The implication is that the child will have both good looks and the sexual skills suitable for a prostitute. If children are commodities which can be put to use in the future, parents might be said to own them, giving additional meaning to Allwit's boast that Sir Walter 'gets me all my children'.

One interpretation of the arrangement between Sir Walter and Mistress Allwit is that he pays for her sexual favours. He, also, treats her body as property, like a lessee who expects to enjoy full possession, in return for his payment, and to own any goods produced during the term of the lease. When contemplating his marriage to Moll Yellowhammer, Sir Walter speculates that he will apprentice one boy to Yellowhammer and the other to a vintner: 'there will be wine in bowls i'faith' (1.2.132), a reference to the organisation of trade guilds which stresses the commercial atmosphere of the play. Mistress Allwit's body is thus a vessel into which he has poured his seed, for his enjoyment, but also to allow the conversion of the fruit of his seed into a different form of liquid for his later enjoyment: 'wine in bowls'. Cheapside has not been responsible for corrupting Sir Walter, who has already found occasions for corruption at home, for example his Welsh mistress. But *A Chaste Maid* suggests that, in Cheapside, in the world of London commerce, Sir Walter's superior rank and wealth cannot compete with the superior entrepreneurial skills of Allwit. Where Sir Walter is still hampered by outmoded traits like jealousy, Allwit always aims to place financial considerations first, although even he can sometimes miss a commercial opportunity, as discussed below.

²³ Donald Lupton, *London and the Countrey Carbarnadoed* (1632), 27. Quoted in Gowing, "The freedom of the streets", 139.

'I am tied to nothing/ In this business, what I do is merely recreation, Not constraint'

In this section, I examine acting as work, rather than play. Allwit boasts that the little work he does, in ordering the gossips for the christening, is 'recreation':

That's all the work I'll do; nor need I stir,
But that it is my pleasure to walk forth
And air myself a little; I am tied to nothing
In this business, what I do is merely recreation,
Not constraint. (2.2.2-6)

It can be argued that despite his apparent idleness, Allwit's 'play' is 'work'. In his discussion of the vices contrary to good providence, Gouge singles out as places of idleness: 'Ale-house, Tauerne, Play-house, Bowling-alley....' (256). The house where Sir Walter keeps the Allwit family, and its environs, is like a playhouse and the Allwit family is like a theatrical company. Sir Walter is the patron of the company and an important member of the audience in the playhouse; Allwit is the author, stage manager and major actor in a complex drama in which Sir Walter is also an actor. Ordering the gossips is part of the role Allwit plays outside the family home, as 'father' to his wife's children; at home he plays the 'wittol' for the benefit of Sir Walter, Davy and the servants, for example when he says to Davy that his wife: 'longs for nothing but pickled cucumbers and his [Sir Walter's] coming' (1.2.6-7). Sir Walter plays at paternity among his own servants and within the Allwit establishment but conceals his paternal status in public.

Allwit refers to his own behaviour as a kind of performance, or game, and he acts the role of a servant in response to which Sir Walter demands that Allwit first remove and then put on his hat, and remove Sir Walter's boots, thus acknowledging Sir Walter as his superior. Allwit says: 'The game begins already' (1.2.80). Sir Walter's game is to play the rich lover and father, acting out his role in funding the household. Allwit comments: 'tis but observing, 'tis but observing a man's humour once and he may ha' him by the nose all his life' (1.2.83-85). Allwit thus indicates, first, that to know how to deal with Sir Walter he must watch him. Because Allwit is acting he controls the impression of his position that is conveyed to Sir Walter, and thus has him by the nose. Allwit also implies that Sir Walter 'pays through the nose' for what he receives in return and the early seventeenth century use of 'nose' for 'penis' strengthens the link between sex and finance. Allwit 'plays' the role of husband who is not jealous of his wife's sexual activities with another man and he 'plays' the father within his family when Sir Walter, Davy and the servants are not around. He engages in a different form of performance when he hints to Davy that he is the father and Sir Walter is the cuckold.

The roles of 'wittol' played by Allwit, and of 'father' played by Sir Walter, demand supporting performances from other characters. Mistress Allwit must reassure Sir Walter that she is a loving mistress who bears his child. When she tells Sir Walter that she is 'made lightsome e'en by him that made me heavy' (1.2.136), her performance is thus as much about Sir Walter's paternity and Allwit's cuckoldry as it is about maternity. Her pregnancy, followed by the new baby, also invokes past 'performances' by Mistress Allwit when she and Sir Walter engaged in the sexual act that gave rise to conception; the same applies to the presence of the boys, Wat and Nick. How genuine Mistress Allwit's performances have been while Sir Walter has maintained the family is unclear. She has partly convinced Sir Walter, although his

jealousy suggests that he has some doubts, or that it is only during the performance that he can suspend his disbelief. That she might have been acting the role of Sir Walter's loving mistress throughout (and other roles in a different play when he is absent) is suggested by her willingness to abandon him when his fortunes are altered. She engages in jests at his expense, such as proposing that he could be placed during his illness in 'a place for easement' (5.1.135), that is, a privy. Wat and Nick, apprentice players, give inadequate performances as Sir Walter's children when they call Allwit 'father' while Sir Walter is present. At the christening, Allwit's past performance as 'father' in finding the gossips is shown to have been effective in that the gossips are prepared to confirm the baby's resemblance to him even as they demonstrate that as what they see in the child is 'a little woman', they detect an image of womanhood, not Allwit.

The Allwit family and Sir Walter, therefore, engage in a series of ambiguous performances. The ambiguity not only casts doubt on the concept of paternity, by blurring the distinction between the true father and the false one, it reduces married life to the status of a performance in which husbands and wives act out their given roles according to a prepared text for financial gain, and where passion, affection and love for children are illusory. In the performances by the Allwit family for Sir Walter, Mistress Allwit stars as a loving mistress and Allwit takes the role of 'wittol'. The meaning of cuckoldry and paternity in *A Chaste Maid* is thus highly destabilised, part of the loosening of sexual categories when morality gives precedence to commerce. In *The Winter's Tale*, concern about cuckoldry and paternity is a sign of royal paranoia. In *A Chaste Maid*, the husband of a pregnant woman claims not to be concerned that he is not the father of her child but gives hints that he might be. Sir Walter, her lover, would be reduced to furious rage if he even suspected the possibility that he is a quasi-cuckold. Society itself is becoming unmoored.

'But as thou say'st, we must give way to need/ And live awhile asunder/ Our desires/ Are both too fruitful for our barren fortunes'

The situation of Touchwood senior's wife is superficially quite different to that of Mistress Allwit who has a husband and a lover at home. Because Touchwood senior is super-prolific, his wife must go home to her uncle to avoid conceiving more children.

Some only can get riches and no children,
We only can get children and no riches! (2.1.11-12).

Touchwood means 'tinder' and, as the Wench says, 'You do but touch and take' (2.1.70).²⁴ His reason for their separation: 'our desires/ Are both too fruitful for our barren fortunes' (2.1. 8-9), establishes human procreation as inevitably linked to finance. Touchwood describes his wife as 'matchless' (2.1. 37), contrasting her with a wife who would have 'hang'd/ About my neck, and never left her hold/ Till she had kiss'd me into wanton businesses....' (2.1. 27-29).

²⁴ See fn. *Dramatis Personae*, 163.

He claims that, in their concern for financial security, he and she exemplify true wedlock:

I hold that wife a most unmatched treasure
That can unto her fortunes fix her pleasure,
And not unto her blood: this is like wedlock,
The feast of marriage is not lust but love,
And care of the estate. (2.1.47-51)

In naming 'care of the estate' as an important element of marriage, Touchwood senior is similar to Gouge and his reference to 'love', as opposed to 'lust', conjures up the ideal of early seventeenth century companionate marriage, of which procreation is only one element. Their solution to their problem is as perverse as that adopted by the Allwits. Boutilier's assessment is that the Touchwood seniors' marriage is a practical illustration of the limited vision of the authors of domestic tracts, who assumed that 'unobstructed and unlimited fertility in marriage could smoothly coincide with a business-like management of the household...' (29). I agree. The concept of marriage as a contract and the idea that marital duties are thus owed to the other party emphasises the financial basis of marriage. Touchwood senior's wife is an 'unmatched treasure', in the world of *A Chaste Maid*, because she allows finance to take precedence over everything else. Morally her behaviour is as dubious as that of her husband. He and his wife can be described as mutually insatiable, as indicated by his view of the consequences if they live together but she is not weak or sick so there are no grounds for denying her due benevolence. His 'drinkings abroad' would not have been contemplated by Gouge (2.1.16), and he jokes, in an aside: 'This gear will not hold out' (2.1.17), reminiscent of Ambroise Paré's warnings about the effects on men of excessive sexual activity.²⁵ Abstinence was frowned on by religious authorities as a method of contraception. In any case, a cardinal duty of early seventeenth century husbands and wives was to live together, exceptions being permissible for short periods, for soldiers, sailors, ambassadors, merchants, lawyers, courtiers, midwives and other nurses; and in such cases, both partners are obliged, 'by letters, messages, tokens, and other like kindnesses' to reassure each other of their desire to be together (Gouge, 231-233).²⁶ The Touchwoods senior plan to meet regularly: 'Talk in mirth, and play at kisses.../ Anything, wench, but what may beget beggars' (2.1.39-40). It is not clear what exactly he proposes but it could be unacceptable.²⁷

Touchwood senior, to date, has treated sexual activity as play, as opposed to work: 'I ne'er play'd yet/ Under a bastard' (2.1.55-56). Unlike either Sir Walter or Allwit, Touchwood senior does not claim ownership of, or a financial interest in, the women he seduces but he also sees them in terms of their money-making ability, in this case their role as workers in the agricultural economy. He boasts that the pregnancies and

²⁵ *Of the Generation of Man*, 887. 'Gear' meant 'business' as well as 'genitals'; (2.1.17, fn.)

²⁶ See Gouge on the unlawfulness of husbands and wives living apart (234-235). For a discussion of the reasons why couples lived separately, in practical disobedience of the obligation to live together, see Eric Josef Carlson, *Marriage and the English Reformation*, 146-147.

²⁷ Gouge attacks couples who use abstinence as a method of contraception on the basis that it is a sin like that of Onan (Genesis 38.9-10), who 'spilled his seed upon the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother' and was slain by the Lord (Gouge, 222-223). Intercourse during menstruation, 'the time of a wifes separation for her disease' was also prohibited: 'For what can be expected from such polluted copulation, but a leprous and loathsome generation?' (223). *Aristotle's Master-Piece* speaks of 'unseasonable...venery' as 'the cause of so many monstrous shapes' (44).

deliveries which result from his activities interfere with work: 'For every harvest I shall hinder hay-making' (2.1.61).²⁸ Like the gold in *Chruso-thriambos*, his own seed is potentially fruitful, but only becomes profitable when he invests it in the Kix family, so that their barren fortunes can be revived and the Touchwoods senior can resume life as a family. Sir Oliver and Lady Kix blame each other for the failure to conceive but in the event it is proved to be the failure of Sir Oliver.²⁹ Sir Oliver agrees to pay four hundred pounds to Touchwood senior for his 'little vial of almond milk' (3.3.96). One hundred pounds is to be paid in advance with successive payments of one hundred at quickening, when Lady Kix is brought to bed and when the baby is born alive, a reminder of the various stages at which early modern procreation might fail. Sir Oliver is so delighted when Sir Walter is disinherited in favour of Lady Kix's baby that he offers a home to Touchwood senior and his family: 'Be not afraid to go to your business roundly;/ Get children, and I'll keep them' (5.4.81-82). Compared to Allwit, the wittol, Sir Oliver is a true cuckold because he remains ignorant of his cuckoldry. He gains financially from his wife's adultery and also becomes a man in his own eyes: 'Ho, my wife's quick'ned. I am a man for ever!' (5.3.1). Being a man, for Sir Oliver, depends on displaying the children he has produced and also displaying the riches he has inherited.

'She has made calves' heads of us'

The unrealistic expectation of seventeenth century moralists, described by Boutilier, that parents will find the means to support an unlimited number of children, is exemplified by the words of T. Hilder: 'God never makes mouths but he provides meat'.³⁰ Cheapside was famous for its meat market and the comparison of babies and meat has been described as the 'controlling metaphor' of *A Chaste Maid*.³¹ The intersection in the play between doubtful commercial practices, pregnancy and theatre is at its most powerful, complex and unsavoury in the brief scene where a Wench manages to rid herself of an unwanted child which she has concealed in a basket under a loin of mutton. She thus tricks the 'Promoters', informers who gather evidence of unlawful traffic in meat during Lent but make a profit by selling on the meat they confiscate and by accepting bribes to ignore illegal dealings. The Promoters are shown taking veal from a man who has tried to conceal it under dirty linen and then lamenting the fact that it is not mutton because they have promised to find mutton for a woman who 'longs' for mutton, that is has a pregnant craving for it (2.2.120-122). They then speak with the servant of a man who 'has purchased the whole Lent together', by paying them 'ten groats a-piece on Ash Wednesday' (2.2.126-136). Because they are tricked by the Wench, the Promoters are left holding the baby, a result they assess in financial terms:

Half our gettings must run in sugar-sops
And nurses wages now, besides many a pound of soap
And tallow; we have need to get loins of mutton still,
To save suet to change for candles. (2.2.184-187)

²⁸ See, 2.1.61, fn.

²⁹ Laurence argues that although 25% of couples were childless this was often due to the failure of a child to survive. In 12% of cases the lack of children was estimated to be due to infertility (Laurence, 76).

³⁰ T. H[ilder], *Conjugall Counsell* (London, 1653), 18, 20, quoted in Crawford, 'Sexual Knowledge in England', 99.

³¹ Loughrey and Taylor, (xviii).

Allwit describes the Promoters in language that links them to whores, aphrodisiacs and witches. He imagines how: 'This Lent will fat the whoresons up with sweetbreads/ And lard their whores with lamb-stones' (2.2.68-69); that is, they will grow fat on offal thought to be an aphrodisiac and feed it to their whores; and the double chins of the whores will 'hang like udders' and 'give the milk of witches' (2.2.71-73).³² The Promoters lay wagers on what else might be in the basket and the one who feels the baby thinks it might be 'a lamb's head' (2.2.171). On learning that they have been duped, Promoter 2 cries: 'Nothing mads me but this was a lamb's head with you, you felt it. She has made calves' heads of us' (2.2.188-189). When Allwit speaks of being 'a stranger both unto the City/ And her carnal strictness' (2.2.76-77), it is clear that he compares the consumption of flesh with sexual intercourse. The Promoter tells him that his belly: 'Should be fulfill'd with answerable food,/ To sharpen blood, delight health, and tickle nature' (2.2.88-90).

The scene represents the way that commercial imperatives have replaced what were considered moral duties based on religious beliefs. Again there are links to procreation and to theatre. The early seventeenth century prohibition on eating meat during Lent was not imposed for religious reasons but to protect the fish trade. The 'fish laws' had been established in the reign of Elizabeth I, to revive coastal towns and maintain the seafaring population, important for its contribution of sailors to both the royal and mercantile navies. Another goal was to reduce the consumption of mutton and beef, which resulted in the conversion of arable pasture into grazing land. Thus, as well as controlling the produce that could be consumed by the populace and attempting to control the use to which land could be put, the laws ensured the ongoing production of sailors, for future commercial use in the mercantile navy and to become 'cannon fodder' in the royal navy or, in the words of Falstaff, 'food for powder'.³³

Although the fish laws did not have any direct religious aim, they took advantage of the fact that people had become used to observing fast days, times when moralists suggested that married couples should also avoid intercourse.³⁴ Lent was also a period when performances at public playhouses were prohibited. Leeds Barroll states that from 1580 to 1611, 'plays were probably forbidden by the authorities from Ash Wednesday to Easter', although enforcement of this prohibition may have varied in intensity.³⁵ When Allwit sees the Promoters, he cries: 'How did they know my wife lies in?' (2.2.74). Women who were lying-in were exempted from complying with

³² See 2.2.68-73, *fn*s, for comments on sweetbreads and lamb's testicles as aphrodisiacs; the identification of bawds by double chins; the feeding of familiars by witches from teats 'variously located'.

³³ See G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries: Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1944), 189-190. In *I Henry IV*, Falstaff replies to Prince Hal's comment that his men are 'pitiful rascals': 'Tut, tut, good enough to toss, food for powder, food for powder. They'll fill a pit as well as better. Tush, man, mortal men, mortal men' (*Norton Shakespeare*, 1147-1224, 4.2.58-60). No doubt coincidentally, the Goldsmiths and Fishmongers had been friends 'time out of mind' (*Chruso-thriambos*, 26).

³⁴ Gouge refers to days when intercourse is against '*Pietie*', to the words of the Prophets 'bidding the bridegroom and bride goe out of their chamber in the day of a Fast' (223).

³⁵ *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater* (Ithaca, N. Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 1991). Appendix I: Playing in Lent: 1580-1613, includes details of occasions when plays were not allowed during Lent (211-216). Barroll notes, however, that plays 'were performed at court for several weeks during Lent [in 1613] to celebrate the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and the Elector Palatine' (201).

the fish laws, because they required nourishment after their ordeal: 'then she may eat at dinner a little meat, with her Broth' (Guillemeau, 193).

Both Allwit and the Wench engage in a performance for the Promoters. Allwit's performance is sheer play, put on to 'baffle 'em gallantly' (2.2.75). He pretends to be a visitor to the city, seeking out illegally slaughtered meat for his own consumption and leads the Promoters on to believe they will be led to a butcher nearby. The Wench plays to save herself from the consequences of being found with an illegitimate child. She may be the same young woman who bore a child to Touchwood senior (an association that could be reinforced in production). No Wench appears in the original list of 'The Names of the Principal Persons', and the text does not provide enough evidence to make a decision. The following discussion points out the different implications of a performance with one rather than two Wenches.

Single women who bore children in early seventeenth century England could expect to be stigmatised as 'whores', held in a house of correction or physically punished by whipping and questioned during labour about the identity of the father.³⁶ Their children were usually sent out to nurse. A mother who tried to keep her child would find that 'her material circumstances...made it difficult or impossible for her to support it, in which case again the parish or poor law officials would intervene by taking the child away and placing it in another household' (Mendelson and Crawford, 148). While illegitimate birth was not common, it was not unusual with, as discussed in Chapter One, an estimated overall illegitimacy ratio of between two and three per cent at the end of Elizabeth's reign.

The circumstances in which the Wench gave birth are not shown but it seems likely that the birth of her baby was as different as possible from the birth of Mistress Allwit's girl. It would have taken place in secret, without the support of other women and she would not have enjoyed the normal period of lying-in. Otherwise, the parish would have kept the child. If she is the same Wench whose child was fathered by Touchwood senior, she has given birth four times previously and is no chaste maid (2.1.105-106). In this case, Sir Walter's ability and willingness to pay for Mistress Allwit's upkeep and the upkeep of her children, can be contrasted with Touchwood senior's initial refusal to do so and his subsequent handing over of a purse with what money he has. Otherwise, her position can be even more sharply distinguished from that of Mistress Allwit whose baby has two fathers. Touchwood senior's Wench threatens to pursue him for support 'through the streets' (2.1.68) but he laughs off the suggestion and advises her to abandon the child: 'There's tricks enough to rid thy hand on't, wench' (2.1.95) although, as noted, he gives her his purse. He is equally amused at the idea that he has ruined the marriage of her cousin, making a play on the word 'bout', which conflates sexual and legal contests, with the implication that all a woman can expect if she seeks out a lawyer to assist her in court is a 'bout' with the lawyer: 'True, lawyers use such bouts as other men do' (2.1.79). He offers to 'tender' a different husband for her: 'I keep of purpose two or three gulls in pickle/ To eat such mutton with' (2.1. 80-82). In such a case, she may be able to keep her child but her husband will be syphilitic.³⁷

³⁶ See Chapter One.

³⁷ 2.1.81, fn.

The Wench who abandons her child does so through a performance which relies on her recognition that she has enough wit to appear a fool and thus fool the Promoters. But there is a reminder that a woman in her position might well have been desperate enough to kill her child to escape detection. When Promoter I looks at her basket and notes the meat, he says:

Look! look! poor fool,
 She has left the rump uncover'd too,
 More to betray her; this is like a murd'rer
 That will outface the deed with a bloody band. (2..2.141-144).

Infanticide was a reasonably common occurrence. For example, of all homicides in sixteenth century Middlesex, seven per cent were infanticide.³⁸ It was a crime associated with unmarried women whose main motivation was poverty; and after 1624, with the passage of a statute 'to prevent the Murthering of Bastard Children', it became even more difficult for a single woman suspected of giving birth. If she concealed the birth and the baby died, she was required to produce evidence that it was born dead (Mendelson and Crawford, 44-45).

The Wench acts out a portrayal of guilty innocence, first claiming her lowly status as a servant and pleading with them: 'Let me go' (2.2.147), then offering to bring in a higher authority in the form of her master to show that the meat is for her mistress who is exempted from the fish laws on medical grounds; she then pleads with the Promoters to keep the basket safe until she returns and asks them to swear they will (1.2.145-159). There is just a hint that babies are not simply another form of meat. The Promoters discuss their options: Promoter 1: 'The quean made us swear to keep it too'; Promoter 2: 'We might leave it else' (2.2.179-180). They speak as if they consider themselves bound by an oath given under a misapprehension, which, when they thought the basket contained only meat, they had no intention of keeping. In deciding to roast the mutton and send the baby to Brainford to be nursed, the Promoters allow a distinction between human off-spring and other flesh which is rare in *A Chaste Maid*.³⁹

'Now in goes the long fingers that are wash'd/ Some thrice a day in urine'

The midwife in *A Chaste Maid* brings in the baby as the party leave for the christening and then exits again without speaking (2.4). Her brief appearance serves as a reminder that, in early seventeenth century London, being a midwife was 'work', work mainly performed by women. It was a role that linked childbirth and finances in a more salubrious manner than the equation of children with goods for sale. As discussed in the Introduction, midwives in London were respectable married women or widows, licensed by the church but if the midwife who appears briefly in *A Chaste Maid* is in this category, the childbirth rituals are presented as disreputable and licentious. The presence of the midwife as the party leaves for church links the birth with the feast. Mistress Allwit appears in bed and her labour is discussed: 'O she had great speed;.../ The midwife found her a most cheerful daughter' (3.2.20-25). The lying-in month, discussed in the Introduction, was a period during which the life of a household is given over to childbirth, from before the birth, through the period of recovery, the child's christening, a feast for the mother and her gossips and the

³⁸ See Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, 83.

³⁹ Brainford is Brentford, a suburb where babies were put out to nurse; see 2.2.198, fn.

churching of the mother.⁴⁰ Allwit has already described how childbirth has led to the presence of extra women, 'running to and fro, nurse upon nurse,/ Three charwomen, besides maids and neighbours' children' (2.2.7-8). What is portrayed is not the calm enclosed space, described by Adrian Wilson. Here, as if to emulate the swelling of pregnancy, childbirth takes over the whole house and is disruptive. Although some men visited women during the lying-in period, the presence of strangers like Tim Yellowhammer and his tutor appears to be a breach of custom.⁴¹

One feature of Mistress Allwit's lying-in is its cost, a sign of the supposed wealth of the family. Wilson argues that even in small households where no space was available for a separate lying-in chamber, 'in place of a separate room the bed itself could serve as the lying-in space' (80-81). He comments that 'wealthy mothers made an extensive display of their lying-in chamber'. No status was gained by a married woman simply by lying-in, so it 'had to be shown by other means' (81). Gossip 3 says of Mistress Allwit: 'See, gossip, and she lies not in like a countess' (3.2.93), reminiscent of Allwit's words: 'A lady lies not in like her' (1.2.31). The cost of the feast extends to lavish provision of comfits and wine.

The women present at the feast are potentially respectable. The gossips are the wives of merchants, such as apothecaries and comfit-makers (2.4.10-14). Counting Mistress Allwit, the dry nurse, Maudline and Moll Yellowhammer, Lady Kix, four gossips and at least two Puritans, there are at least eleven female characters on stage at the same time, unusual in early seventeenth century drama. Although Allwit has by far the longest speeches in the scene, the women characters speak far more than the men, and women's speech is presented as an uncontrolled flow of words. Gossip 3 tells how her daughter has a 'secret fault' (3.2.96). She is too 'free', and 'cannot lie dry in her bed' (3.2.100-102); Gossip 4 remarks: 'Wine can do that, I see, that friendship cannot' (3.2.99). Lack of discretion is associated with sexual and urinary incontinence. One of the Puritans, Mistress Underman, speaks drunkenly of the 'well-spring of discipline, that waters all the brethren' (3.2.176-177); in standing to kiss Tim, she falls and cries 'Tis but the common affliction of the faithful,/ We must embrace our falls' (3.2.180-181).

The behaviour of the women, who are not pregnant, is similar to the specifically female excesses identified with pregnancy. When Sir Walter first arrives in the house, Mistress Allwit is described as longing 'for nothing but pickled cucumbers and his coming' (1.2.6), a reference to the cravings of pregnant women for unusual food, with a *double entendre* concerning Sir Walter's penis. In line with the identification of the mouth and the vagina, in the reference to the baby having its mother's mouth 'up and down, up and down', this craving for food is associated with indiscriminate sexual desire. The women also seek to kiss Tim Yellowhammer, against his wishes, with wet kisses: 'O this is horrible, she wets as she kisses!' (3.2.167). The comfits and wine are eaten and drunk, to excess, and also stolen, by the gossips and other women attending: 'Again! She has taken twice already' (3.2.61); 'These women have no consciences at sweetmeats' (3.2.65). The gossips

⁴⁰ Adrian Wilson, 'The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation', 73.

⁴¹ Sir Walter is a gossip and is accompanied by Moll Yellowhammer and her mother. Wilson notes that the christening was not, theoretically, a place for the parents but for the child and its godparents, so baptising a child before its mother was churched is theoretically sound, although some mothers, apparently, wanted to be present in church and delayed the baptism (80).

describe the baby as a 'little woman' but, in their lack of control over bodily functions, they can be compared to babies. The effect is first to categorise childbirth as a form of bodily evacuation similar to urination, over which women have no control. All women, pregnant or not, are implicated in this insatiable desire to consume and the subsequent need to evacuate. Allwit's reference to 'vessels' also suggests the 'Aristotlean' view of wombs as vessels into which men placed their seed for it to develop, rather than the 'Galenian' idea that women also contributed seed at conception.⁴²

Despite the large number of women in the scene, matters are presented from a male point of view. Although the women themselves give examples of female incontinence, Allwit's comments direct audience attention to what is taking place and stress that their behaviour is incontinent. He notes that the feasters 'have drunk so hard in plate/ That some of them had need of other vessels' (3.2.185-186), and doubts that wetness on the floor, under the stools where the gossips sat, can be attributed only to spilled wine (3.2.204-206). Like Mistress Allwit, the 'tumbler', the gossips and other women are depicted as morally unstable. Allwit describes 'how they have lain them [the rushes under the stools]/ E'en as they lie themselves, with their heels up, and he talks about their 'short, figging, little shittlecork heels!/ These women can let nothing stand as they find it' (3.2.210-213).

Allwit is illegitimate as a husband and father but his presence and speech is what prevails, providing a misogynistic view of women and procreation. Urine is another form of excrement from which profit can be made and Allwit misses an opportunity to collect it, although the close-stool was available for the purpose. Allwit observes the woman's long fingers 'that are wash'd/ Some thrice a day in urine—my wife uses it' (III.2.56-57), a reference to the use of urine as a cosmetic.⁴³ Like the silk ('bowels and entrails of worms') and pearls ('white excrement of shell-fish') against which Williams inveighs, excrement has a potential commercial value. A baby is only different because it is more costly to maintain until it can be put to profitable use. Procreation and digestive functions are thus alike, circular processes of input and output, with a commercial basis.

A Chaste Maid, therefore, criticises the world of Cheapside for its devaluation of human life by treating conception, pregnancy and childbirth as part of a cycle of production leading to consumption. In the process, all normal distinctions are obliterated between human bodies, the flesh of other animals, bodily secretions, goods like clothing and drugs, and buildings. The only criterion to judge them by is their monetary value. *A Chaste Maid* implies that gold itself is no more than the end product of a process of production and consumption, but it gives the same message about children. The effect is to reduce women to mere machines to be used by men as playthings or as warehouses to store children until they can be put to use. Those children who are likely to be unprofitable must be discarded.

The play also demonstrates the theatricality of a society in which reality is judged through appearances and outward ceremonies, not by truth. Mistress Allwit, a lower class woman, can be compared to a lady, and to a countess, because her lover has provided her with costly clothes. Sir Oliver, who is barren, inherits an estate because his wife bears another man's child. He takes the illusion for reality and believes that

⁴² See Introduction.

⁴³ See 3.2.57, fn.

he is now a 'man', and in the world of *A Chaste Maid*, he *is* a man because he has money and a child to enable him to get more money, making manhood depend on outward proof. Tim Yellowhammer's new wife says: 'Sir, if your logic cannot prove me honest,/ There's a thing call'd marriage, and that makes me honest' (5.4.114-115).

Theatre, in *A Chaste Maid*, is presented as all-pervasive and the message is that all performances are untrustworthy. This can be summed up in the final scene where the 'funerals' of Moll Yellowhammer and Touchwood junior are converted into their wedding, to the joy of all attending: 'Never was hour so fill'd with joy and wonder' (5.4.54), lines which echo the wonder and joy in *The Winter's Tale* when the reunion of the two kings and Perdita is described. The young lovers have been confined in coffins from which they rise, symbolising their revival from the dead and their entry to a new married life. The coffins are containers, like the basket in which the Wench conceals the baby, which are a reminder of the womb and its function in procreation. Because the contents are concealed, acting can imply that they contain something quite different from what they really are. The Wench acts so that the Promoters think she is concealing a baby. Touchwood senior acts as if Moll and his brother are dead. The reality is revealed to be different. The implication is that there is a distinction between acting and reality and that it is possible to know it. But the representation of performance as untrustworthy, through the medium of the theatre, makes it doubtful whether even this message can be trusted.

I commented earlier that when Middleton wrote *A Chaste Maid*, Goldsmith's Row was already declining and was to become visibly rotten and infiltrated by outsiders. By 1622, there were complaints that the Rows were infested by strange trades: 'booksellers, stocking men, haberdashers...and other meane trades crept into the Goldsmithes Rowe, that was wont to be the bewtie and glorie of Cheapeside'⁴⁴ Acting was a trade considered by the City to be so mean that it did not have a guild and the City indicated its disapproval by seeking to exclude the houses in which performances took place. Griffiths comments on the language subsequently used by those who condemned the infestation of the Rows as similar to 'descriptions of theft or the passage of the pox through infected bodies'. They spoke of 'strangers', 'tucked away out of reach in "secret corners"', who 'crept' into the rows, cutting 'deceitful jewels' (179).⁴⁵ Stephen Mullaney describes the view of early-seventeenth-century theatre held by the City of London, as a threat to the social fabric which subtly infects the city like a plague: 'Plagues and players were...difficult to identify and impossible to put down'.⁴⁶ In *A Chaste Maid*, only the Yellowhammers are insiders in Goldsmiths' Row. All the rest are strangers, from different ranks or from outside the City. In particular, the Allwits are actors who cut 'deceitful jewels'. The other great performer in *A Chaste Maid* is Touchwood senior, whose jewels are also deceitful. But Mistress Allwit, with her embossings, embroidrings, spanglings and the like is like Goldsmiths Row itself and the secret places where 'deceitful jewels' are cut are like her womb.

⁴⁴ John Chamberlain, Letters, II, 60, quoted in Griffiths, 177.

⁴⁵ There were Rows of goldsmiths' shops in Lombard Street, as well as Cheapside, and Griffiths speaks of both, but with most emphasis on Cheapside.

⁴⁶ *The Place of the Stage*, 50

The pregnant boy in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

In *A Chaste Maid*, the play's possible message against theatrical display, as a denial of truth, would have been complicated in early performances by the fact that women in the play, including all the women who are pregnant and those who have given birth, were played by boys. At the feast after the baptism, the behaviour of the gossips, who are not pregnant, is comparable to the excessive behaviour associated with pregnant women; and the gossips tumbled on the floor are reminiscent of Mistress Allwit. The implication is that pregnancy and childbirth do not distinguish a woman from other women because, from birth, all women spout words and water, so that the baby, the new mother and the incontinent gossips are all one. I noted earlier that this scene would place a certain amount of stress on a theatrical company due to the number of women characters on stage at the same time. Plays often include no more than four women characters and there are eleven women on stage in this scene. Possibly some of them might have been played by older men, although there is no proof that this took place. But it would have been possible to maintain both the appearance of pregnancy in Mistress Allwit, and her similarity to the other tumblers, by making all the feasters look fat and possibly pregnant, thus emphasising the ambiguity of pregnancy and its deceptiveness. *A Chaste Maid* depicts a number of pregnancies which are not 'true' in the moral sense and the moral ambiguity would have been strengthened by the fact the women are sexually ambiguous because they are played by boys.

Throughout the play there are scenes and phrases designed to draw attention to the boy actors, adding a further layer of ambiguity to what is presented. The play shows a society in which the only distinction to be made between women and children, buildings, furniture and excrement is their commercial value. On stage in early performances, the distinction between men and women was also obliterated. Although the play can be described as 'about' human procreation, one of the two essential elements required for conception was not present. The play in performance would therefore have both highlighted the differences between men's and women's bodies in the matter of giving birth, while also denying them by using actors whose bodies did not bear those differences.

The general sense of unease that arises when a boy, who can never be pregnant, is presented as pregnant, which I have discussed in earlier chapters, is present in *A Chaste Maid*. As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, a false pregnancy, especially the kind that resulted in a lump of flesh which could not live, was referred to as a 'Moon-calf'. Sir Walter likens the appearance of Mistress Allwit to 'a moon at full', to which Allwit replies that, if her child is a boy, 'there's the man in the moon', while Sir Walter rejoins "'Tis but the boy in the moon yet, goodman calf' and Allwit: 'There was a man, the boy had never been there else' (1.2.137-141). Alan Brissenden suggests that the references to 'the man in the moon' and 'goodman calf' imply a mooncalf or false pregnancy.⁴⁷ There is no suggestion that Mistress Allwit's child is deformed or monstrous, quite the reverse, although she may well be morally deformed in the future. Nothing about the description of the baby suggests that she lacks anything in the physical sense. Presumably she would have been represented by a doll of some kind, swaddled and thus impossible to see properly, adding more humour to the gossips' belief that they can detect a likeness to Allwit; but perhaps a

⁴⁷ Note to 1.2.137-141.

real child would have been available to carry on and off stage. In the scene between Touchwood senior and the Wench, she carries her baby and Touchwood senior suggests that it is stunted and 'wants/ A nail or two' (2.1.84-85) implying a child born with syphilis;⁴⁸ the Wench argues that the child 'hath right shape, and all the nails it should have' (2.1.89). While syphilis eventually becomes visible through physical signs, it can pass unnoticed in the early stages, like plague or like pregnancy. The exchange focuses attention on the body of the boy playing the Wench, as a potential site of disease and disruption. Later, a baby is hidden in the basket, like a child in the womb and the possible hint about a moon-calf is echoed when the Promoter says: 'She has made calves' heads of us'. The comparison of a new-born baby with a lump of meat once again evokes the fears of monstrous births discussed in earlier chapters. Once again, the boy actor, who has supposedly just given birth, has demonstrated that he could not give birth to anything other than a monster.

In other respects, pregnancy and childbirth appear to be cut off from the realm of the physical and relegated to that of representation. I have argued throughout this chapter that family households in *A Chaste Maid* are presented as brothels and theatres, in which husbands and wives give false and misleading performances. I suggest that this playing with performance, especially about sexuality, would have ensured that the status of the boy actors was to the fore in the minds of the audience. Mistress Allwit, in particular, is a 'tumbler', a performer. She acts a loving mistress to Sir Walter until he loses his money, when her reaction makes it doubtful whether her performance to that point has been genuine or false. Her dishonesty, as a character, is emphasised by the 'dishonesty' of the boy who acted her. His difference from her would have been reinforced by the fact that she acts what she is not, as he would also have been acting what he was not.

Mistress Allwit first appears as she prepares to lie in after Allwit describes her, 'as if she lay with all the gawdy shops/ In Gresham's Bourse about her' (1.2.33-34). Allwit says of his wife: 'A lady lies not in like her' (1.2.31); and a gossip at her feast says: 'See, gossip, and she lies not in like a countess' (3.2.93). 'Lies not in like' is an interesting construction. Used by Allwit, the words establish a similarity between Mistress Allwit and a lady, while maintaining a distinction. Although she lies in better than a lady, Mistress Allwit is not one. She does not become a lady because she wears clothes befitting a different rank but, in the world of *A Chaste Maid*, this does not matter. She has become 'like' a 'lady'. Used by the gossip, the effect is similar, except that the comparison with a countess is so outlandish as to cast doubt on the judgement or knowledge of the gossip.⁴⁹ I suggest that the boy playing Mistress Allwit was 'like' a woman, even a pregnant one, for the purposes of the commercial theatre, only if the patrons accepted the performance and continued to pay their money. However, just as audiences have been likened in *A Chaste Maid* to the patrons of a brothel, in its exposure of the way in which the genuine article is

⁴⁸ See 2.1.85, fn.

⁴⁹ In the first instance, Mistress Allwit is placed first in the comparison. Here she is placed second and the immediate sense is that she does not lie in like a countess, as if, despite the lavish expense, the feast falls short of what a countess would have; if so, not only is the distinction between Mistress Allwit and a countess maintained but the performance is not sufficient to persuade the audience. But the use of 'and' can mean 'if' in grammatical constructions of this kind, suggesting that the gossip compares the lying-in to that of a countess.

constantly replaced by the fake, *A Chaste Maid* also queries the judgement of audiences who accept fakes as real.

One message for an early modern audience, seems to be that a pregnant boy is as good as a pregnant woman but only if you can get good value from him. In the theatre, a boy gave good value as an actor of women and, arguably, there were many occasions where the boy's ability to act effectively like a woman was valuable to the company. In this play, which depends for its comedy on images of pregnant or post-parturative women who are other than they seem, the test of a good performance would have depended on how far the boy could sustain the illusion of being a pregnant woman while still insisting that he was, in fact, a boy. The play also sends a message about the pervasiveness of sexual promiscuity in London. Linked with allegations by the antitheatricalists of sexual irregularities at the theatres, this might also have implied that the boy was a prostitute and that his value lay in the money he could earn through this different role. Alternatively, it could have been implied that his acting skill was less important than his homoerotic appeal.

By its numerous metatheatrical references, *A Chaste Maid* forces attention on theatrical representation and on the boys who played pregnancy and the result is a continuing circle of production of contradictory meanings that themselves breed further ambiguity. *A Chaste Maid* makes it clear that a man can play to advantage the role of cuckolded husband who is not his children's father. It would make no difference if his wife was not a woman and her pregnancy was a matter of illusion. Sir Oliver believes he is 'a man for ever!' because his wife has conceived another man's child. He could still think so even if his wife was not a woman and the baby was as illusory as his potency. If children are either gold or shit, it should make no difference that they were born of a woman without a womb.

Chapter Five

Pregnancy as a Loss of Control: *The Duchess of Malfi*

This chapter discusses John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*.¹ The plays discussed in earlier chapters deal with pregnancy as a sign of sin (*Measure for Measure*), as a sign that a marriage has been consummated (*All's Well That Ends Well*), as false proof of adultery (*The Winter's Tale*), and the product of a commercial exchange (*A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*). *The Duchess of Malfi* returns to pregnancy as a condition which reveals sexual relations which the couple wished to remain secret. In this case, the marriage is clandestine because the Duchess chooses a man of lower rank, knowing that this defies the wishes of her family. The play is pervaded by a sense of claustrophobia and confinement, through the need for Antonio and the Duchess to conceal their love in her inner chamber and her pregnancy under concealing clothes. Theatricality is heightened by the presence of Bosola, whose surveillance of the Duchess leads to the disclosure of her pregnancy.

Pregnancy in *The Duchess of Malfi* is associated with lack of control. The Duchess's brothers wish to control the sexuality and marital status of the Duchess, herself a ruler in Malfi, but also ruled by her sexual desires and the uncontrollable longings of pregnancy. The Duchess is also an ambivalent figure, performing the roles of ruler in Malfi and of ordinary widow. As discussed below, special dynastic considerations apply to her freedom to marry. But she must also be judged according to early seventeenth century ideas about the remarriage of widows, marriage between different ranks, clandestine marriages and the necessity for marriages to be sanctified by the church.

The pregnancy of the Duchess is ambiguous. In *Measure for Measure*, Juliet's pregnant appearance is obvious. *The Duchess of Malfi* establishes pregnancy as a secret condition, about which women have greater knowledge than men. The Duchess looks as if she might be pregnant, but it is difficult for an outsider to establish her pregnancy with certainty, simply based on her outward appearance. At the same time, while the performance of the Duchess's pregnancy is intended to remain secret, and her clothes make this possible, she performs the unruly actions of a pregnant woman and this reveals her condition to Bosola. The sense of pregnancy, as an ambiguous performance, is heightened by the contrast between the performance in public by the Duchess as the widowed ruler of Malfi and her private performances in her chamber as the wife of Antonio and mother of his children. He also performs conflicting roles. He acts so successfully as the 'great master of her household' (1.2.8-9), that Ferdinand thinks he would have made a better spy than Bosola, but the Cardinal finds him 'too honest for such business' (1.2.148.154). The play stresses theatricality. In Act 3 scene 4, for example, pilgrims discuss the proposed investment

¹ Quotations from *The Duchess of Malfi* are from D. C. Gumby (ed. and intro.), *John Webster: Three Plays* (London and New York: Penguin English Library, 1972; published in Penguin Books, 1986; a Penguin World's Classics edition), 167-292. The play was written c. 1614, but not published until 1623, *The Tragedy of the Dvchesse Of Malfy* (London, 1623; fac. rpt. Menston, Eng.: Scolar Press, 1968). The play was first performed by the King's Men, in the Spring of 1614, at Blackfriars and, according to the title page of the 1623 edition, also at the Globe. See Gumby, 12; Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies*, 369. It was also performed at court between the Christmas season, 1630-1631 and on 26 December, 1632; see Gurr, 369-370, 377, 387, 389.

of the Cardinal in military costume and the planned pilgrimage of the Duchess: 'I expect/ A noble ceremony' (3.4.5-6). In a masque-like 'dumb-show', accompanied by a 'ditty...sung to very solemn music, by divers churchmen', the Duchess and Antonio are banished, the pilgrims remaining on stage to discuss the implications.² The ambiguity of the Cardinal's change of costume, from churchman to soldier, is a reminder of Bosola's description of the clothes worn by the Duchess, as he tries to decide whether or not she is pregnant. Metatheatrical flourishes of this kind establish parallels between the chamber of the Duchess, her womb, and the theatre, as discussed below.

Webster presents a dramatised version of events which took place during 1505 and 1513, accounts of which had appeared in various collections of stories. His main sources are William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1566-1567), and the source from which Painter derived his version, François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragique* (1565).³ Some critics have used a discrepancy between Webster's sources and his play to argue for a very sympathetic interpretation of the behaviour of the Duchess. Where Painter and de Belleforest, 'adopt a sternly moral attitude towards the Duchess, condemning her for lust and for violating the accepted canons of degree', the Duchess in Webster's version is a 'warm and luminous figure', who progresses 'from pride to humility and hence to salvation'.⁴ Others are even more enthusiastic:

In this respect, he [Webster] quite reversed the attitude of his sources. Most of them condemn the Duchess as headstrong and libidinous. Webster boldly asserts her right to choose a husband without regard to her family or the codes of her social class. And he clearly invites us to admire both the assured sensitivity of her impulses and the perfect self-command with which she meets her fate.⁵

Feminist critics have focussed on the Duchess as exemplifying uncontrollable lust, then excessive patience in her time of trial, although Kathleen McLuskie argues that the Duchess emerges as a witty woman who refuses to accept either the view imposed on her by Antonio of 'exemplary virtuous womanhood' or the view of Ferdinand and the Cardinal that she represents lascivious widowhood.⁶ To Lisa

² See stage directions following 3.4.7.

³ For a discussion of the life of the historical Duchess and the sources for Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, see Elizabeth M. Brennan (ed. and intro.), *The Duchess of Malfi* (London: A C Black and New York: W W Norton, 1993, Third edition, New Mermaids), xvii-xx. Brennan argues that Webster refuses to make judgmental statements about the Duchess and although her brothers, her subjects and, initially, Bosola, view her in a typically early seventeenth century manner as a 'lusty widow', her situation is presented 'in a way that poses questions about the prejudice, weakness or perversity of the men with whom she has to deal' (xxviii-xxix).

⁴ Gumby discusses the Duchess as a character at 28 and the sources at 434.

⁵ Robert M Adams and George M Logan (eds. and intro. for *The Early Seventeenth Century*), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1986, Fifth edition), Vol. I, 1241.

⁶ *Renaissance Dramatists*, 143. See also, McLuskie, 'Drama and sexual politics; the Case of Webster's Duchess', Callaghan (ed. and intro.), *The Duchess of Malfi*, 104-121. McLuskie argues that Webster 'refuses to resolve...the question of the rights and wrongs of the Duchess's remarriage' (111) and that, by presenting prejudices from a number of perspectives, he extended 'the problem beyond the narrow legal and ethical issue of remarriage to a wider consideration of women's actions and possible attitudes to them' (111).

Jardine, the Duchess is such a compelling stage character that audiences wish her to represent 'genuine force and spirited independence as part of a consistent and believable heroic persona'; leading to arguments that there is a connection between such "'strong women'" and emancipated possibilities for individual women of the period' (*Still Harping*, 68); whereas Webster treats her pregnancy unsympathetically, treating her gorging on the apricots as a reminder of her lust (132-133); once the assertion of sexual independence leads to punishment, 'her strength lies in her fortitude in the face of a doom she has brought upon herself' (77).

The argument that the Duchess is treated more favourably by Webster than in his sources is strengthened by the fact that the cruelty and violence to which she is subjected are portrayed on stage rather than simply recounted, thus forcing the audience to view her humiliation and to contrast her behaviour with that of Ferdinand and the Cardinal. But the effect is not so much to assert the right of the Duchess to choose to marry where she wishes, without regard to her family, as to indicate the potential disasters that can follow such a choice and the lack of redress for a woman who finds herself subjected to family pressure, especially when the Church is involved. The Cardinal is hypocritical, corrupt and lecherous. Ferdinand is mad and manifests incestuous desire for his sister. Both brothers act towards her with vicious cruelty. Audience sympathy must rest with the Duchess but this does not necessarily vindicate her actions. Even as it condemns the actions of the Cardinal and Ferdinand, the play can be read as a warning to women about what happens when they disregard cultural norms; and because her humiliation is acted on stage, the warning is even stronger.⁷

As Dymrna Callaghan argues, the Duchess is typical of the way women in Renaissance tragedy are:

...catalysts of tragic action, throwing moral order into confusion rather than merely ratifying its boundaries: they serve not just to define limits but also to uncover the limiting structures of society.⁸

As with other chapters, I will discuss the manner in which pregnancy is represented in the play, followed by a separate section which focuses on the fact that, in early performances, the Duchess was played by a boy actor.

'I am Duchess of Malfi still'

Early modern works about pregnancy speak in terms of governing or controlling the pregnant woman. Guillemeau's *Child-birth* is subtitled: 'Wherein is set downe the **Gouernment** of Women In the Time of their Breeding Childe (emphasis supplied)': 'What dyet and order a woman with child ought to keepe' is directed to things the pregnant woman must be made to do, or avoid, to ensure the safety and proper

⁷ R. S. White argues that, although it might initially be possible 'to see the clandestine relationship between the Duchess and Antonio as dangerously unwise and even foolish', and to 'blame the Duchess for the consequences' of her choice of Antonio, by the time of her death in Act 4, scene 2, this is impossible, without remaining 'inhumanly detached from the action', 'The Moral Design of *The Duchess of Malfi*', Dymrna Callaghan (ed. and intro.), *The Duchess of Malfi*, 201-216, at 205.

⁸ Callaghan, *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 63.

nourishment of the child. The emphasis is on control of the mother's appetites, whether for food or sexual activity:

In the first foure moneths she must likewise abandon *Venus* for feare of shaking the child...(23)

All meates which are either too hote, cold, or too moist, are to be auoided... and likewise all baked meates are vtterly forbidden. (20)

This prescriptive and proscriptive language extends into all areas of human activity:

Her sleepe must be in the night, the better to digest the meate she hath taken:...(21)

They must be forbid riding in Waggins or Coaches, especially in the three first months:...(22)

After these rules, the following chapter: 'How a woman must **gouverne her selfe** the nine moneths she goeth with Child' appears to give more scope to the woman but the emphasis is still on government. *Aristotle's Master-Piece* gives '**Instructions for Women, how to govern themselves....**Such **Instructions** being exceeding necessary, I thought fit to lay them down for a **rule...**' (123). Other writers use the language of order, direction or rule. *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged* has the subtitle 'Containing **Perfect Rules** for *Midwives and Nurses*, as also for *Women*'.⁹

Culpeper's *Directory* lays down **rules** for midwives, and while his subtitle is '*A Guide for Women...*' his emphasis throughout is on what the professional must do, with little discretion for the mother. Sharp's subtitle is: '**Directing Childbearing Women how to behave themselves ...**' and her books have titles such as: 'How to **order** women in childbirth'; and '**...Rules** for the choice of a nurse;...' (title page). A contrast can be noted in the title of Martha Mears's work, written in 1797: *The pupil of nature; or candid advice to the fair sex, on the subjects of pregnancy, childbirth;...* (emphasis supplied throughout the paragraph).

The perception that a woman's role in human reproduction requires government is especially relevant in a play about a woman ruler whose sexuality is perceived by her brothers as requiring government, and whose unorthodox behaviour, in defiance of their wishes, is exposed by the pregnancy to which it leads. When the Cardinal warns his sister that 'You may flatter yourself,/ And take your own choice: privately be married/ Under the eaves of night' (1.2.239-241), he speaks of his intention that the Duchess should only remarry on his instigation. His words apply more generally to echo the fears expressed in *The Winter's Tale* by Leontes and in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* by Sir Walter Whorehound about the impossibility of controlling entry to women's bodies. No matter how zealously she is watched, there is always the possibility that, 'under the eaves of night' a woman will secretly engage in illicit sexual activity. The brothers' concern that their sister might 'take your own choice' is similar to the emphasis in the pregnancy manuals on governing the pregnant woman, by controlling her appetites. If she is a sovereign ruler, the role of the midwife is complicated because the midwife is expected to govern the ruler, and the same applies if she is married to a husband who has no sovereign power. Pregnancy thus provides opportunities for a conflict between the roles of sovereign ruler and

⁹ The work makes a feature of 'Instructions' by Madame Louise Bourgeois, late midwife to the Queen of France, to her daughter, another midwife; but these are more in the nature of narratives of particular births and of advice (1-24).

obedient wife. The old lady who acts as midwife in *The Duchess of Malfi* is with the Duchess when she eats the apricots but is unable to govern her. Nor does Antonio prevent her from eating the fruit.

The Duchess rules in Malfi, as regent for her son who is a minor and heir to his father, the late Duke. Theodora A Jankowski argues that, although she is not shown with ambassadors and courtiers, as Cleopatra is in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Duchess is depicted throughout *The Duchess of Malfi* as a ruler.¹⁰ Jankowski is critical of scholarship which focuses on the Duchess in her 'private roles of wife, mother, unruly widow or victimized woman, and slights consideration of her public role as ruler' (149). She comments that it is surprising that, until recently, critics have been content to contain the Duchess 'through a series of readings that focus on any aspects of [her life] except [her] sovereignty', as if to reinforce the early modern belief that 'women—even when they were sovereign rulers—were not considered part of the political process' (147). She argues that the Duchess is first introduced by Antonio as 'the right noble Duchess' (1.2.112) following his glowing description of the French King and his savage portraits of the Cardinal and Ferdinand. Further, in the discussion with her brothers about remarriage, although they concentrate on her natural rather than her political body, the focus is also on 'the dynastic nature of the early modern aristocratic marriage' (166). Jankowski notes also that this does not fully account for the sexual tension in the encounter between the Duchess and her brothers (166). Jankowski queries comparisons of the 'error' of the Duchess in marrying Antonio, with the 'actual crimes' of Mary, Queen of Scots, for example, 'without really explaining why such an equation is justified' (150). In focussing on the Duchess as a woman who holds political power, Jankowski argues that what is relevant is how she uses 'her bodies politic and natural to serve political ends', making comparisons with Elizabeth I appropriate.¹¹ The Duchess is represented 'as a female sovereign who adopts an unskilful strategy for rule that leads directly to her losing her throne, [but] she is also represented in a somewhat revolutionary way as regards women's gender position in early modern society' (151). Although Jankowski's arguments are persuasive, it is also important, when considering the Duchess as ruler, to consider the more private roles to which Jankowski refers and the ambivalence, which Jankowski notes, between the public and the private aspects of the Duchess, her body politic and her sexual body.

The Duchess is presented as a fully sexual woman with powerful sexual desires. In Act 1, scene 2, she proposes to Antonio, effectively by placing her wedding ring on his finger. In Act 3, scene 2, when she and Cariola joke with Antonio about whether or not he can spend the night with the Duchess, she says: 'I hope in time 'twill grow into a custom,/ That noblemen shall come with cap and knee,/ To purchase a night's lodging of their wives' (3.2.4-6); and she asks him 'To what use will you put me?' (3.2.8). Her sexuality is also borne out by her pregnancy. If critics have focussed on her as a woman rather than a ruler, this is partly because she regards herself as both

¹⁰ *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama* (Urbana and Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 165.

¹¹ In my view, it is unnecessary to draw exact parallels between the behaviour of the Duchess and any historical figure. It is enough simply to note that anxiety existed about uncontrolled royal women. The Italian Catholic setting provides a sufficient distance from any English sovereign women, while still making the point that unmarried royal women need control.

sovereign and ordinary widow, and that she is concerned about the inconsistency between the two roles. As discussed in Chapter Two, women in the early modern period were not supposed to initiate courtship but to respond to advances made by a man and the courtship of Antonio by the Duchess is contrary to prevailing norms for ordinary women.

The Duchess argues that she cannot act as ordinary women act:

The misery of us, that are born great,
We are forc'd to woo, because none dare woo us
...so we
Are forc'd to express our violent passions
In riddles, and in dreams....(1.2.360-365)

But she also argues that she appears before Antonio 'a young widow/ That claims you for her husband, and like a widow,/ I use but half a blush in't' (1.2.376-378). Cariola, the Duchess's maid, says, also identifying the Duchess both as a ruler and a woman and emphasising the difference:

Whether the spirit of greatness, or of woman
Reign most in her, I know not, but it shows
A fearful madness: I owe her much of pity. (1.2.420-422)

Ferdinand and the Cardinal, through their words and actions, demonstrate that they see her not as a sovereign ruler but as a female member of their family whose position, as ruler in Malfi for the time being, they can exploit as long as she does not remarry without their knowledge and permission. They speak of her as potentially uncontrollable because, as a widow, she will wish to remarry. Ferdinand, especially, talks to her as a woman, not a ruler, for example when he tells her: 'And women like that part [of man], which, like the lamprey,/ Hath ne'er a bone in't'.(1.2.258-259), then pretending that he means 'the tongue: variety of courtship;/ What cannot a neat knave with a smooth tale/ Make a woman believe. Farewell, lusty widow' (1.2.260-262).

The Duchess has legal power to rule in Malfi, but this power is eventually demonstrated to be illusory. Her brothers have no legal power over her, either political or familial. Ferdinand is Duke of Calabria and the Cardinal owes his authority to the Church; and a widow does not return, on her husband's death, from his control to the control of her father or brothers. To some extent, this explains the secrecy with which the brothers act to engage Bosola as a spy at the court of Malfi and their resort to imprisonment and murder. Yet once her marriage to Antonio is discovered, she and Antonio see no option but to flee Malfi and, at the instigation of the Cardinal, the Pope intervenes so that they are banished from Ancona where they attend as pilgrims. The Pope, 'forehearing of her looseness,/ Hath seiz'd into th' protection of the Church/ The Dukedom which she held as dowager' (3.4.30-32).

As Jankowski comments, the Duchess is separated from her sovereign power so that when she makes the statement 'I am Duchess of Malfi still' (4.2.141), her claim is a hollow one. Yet, even as her powerlessness is demonstrated, she gains a form of legitimacy, through the first son she bears to Antonio. A potential problem following the remarriage of a royal widow, ruling as regent for her son till he reaches his majority, was the possibility that she would favour children of her new marriage over the rightful heir. At the end of the play, as Jankowski points out, Delio proposes to establish 'this young hopeful gentleman/ In's mother's right' (5.5.112-113), the heir to the late Duke of Malfi having 'somehow disappeared during the course of the

play' (181). The play thus ends with the uncertainty of potential disruption through a claimant to a throne, claiming through his mother, whose right to reign has been extinguished by the Pope's actions and which was not, in any case, inheritable, in competition with the true heir, inheriting through his father.

John L. Selzer puts forward the interesting argument that, in choosing Antonio and thus violating degree, the Duchess acts 'not out of weakness or passion or naïveté, but because she wishes—like Webster—to promote in Malfi a new ethic, one rooted in primacy of worth over degree'.¹² Thus the Duchess, in wooing Antonio, shows an intention 'to divest herself of her role as social better, to discard degree, to establish herself and Antonio as equals', compared to Antonio who is conscious of rank and concerned not to appear as a fortune hunter (89); where the Duchess favours worth and merit, her brothers obsessively favour rank and degree (90), with Bosola wavering between his 'best instincts' which 'put him on the side of merit' (91) and 'his age's allegiance to the concept of inherited position' (92). If Webster, in representing the story of the Duchess, hoped to encourage his audience to approve the political virtues inherent in a meritocracy, he devised suitably powerful portraits of the Cardinal and Ferdinand to exemplify the evils of power based on inheritance divorced from merit. The Duchess's fate and the fate of Antonio suggest that, however admirable the sentiments, those who wish to put them into practice must expect to suffer. In any case, the Duchess argues, speaking to Ferdinand: 'Why might not I marry?/ I have not gone about, in this, to create/ Any new world, or custom' (3.2.110-112). As discussed later in this chapter, what she seeks to create is a safe space apart from the world.

'Marry? They are most luxurious/ Will wed twice'

Many women in early seventeenth century England were widowed and many of them remarried. About a third of marriages were remarriages for one or other of the parties; a third to a half of marriages in some London parishes involved widows, who often married less than a year after the death of a husband.¹³ It is estimated that there were more than twice as many widows as widowers because wives were usually younger than their husbands and thus more likely to be widowed than the reverse.¹⁴

Contrary to what appears to have been a very common practice, many moralists argued that remarriage for widows was inappropriate. In the humanist tradition, for example in the writings of Juan Luis Vives, widowhood was a holy condition, especially where the woman had children, 'which thing is the intent and fruit of matrimony'.¹⁵ Vives invoked St. Paul, arguing that it was better for widows 'if they kept themselves as I am: but yet if they cannot suffer, let them marry. For it is bett[er] to marry than burn' (121). But Vives notes that St Paul had advised Timothy that younger widows 'should marry and bring forth children and rule their house and give

¹² 'Merit and Degree in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*', Harold Bloom (ed. and intro.), *John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987), 87-96, at 88.

¹³ See Anne Laurence, *Women in England*, 46.

¹⁴ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*: 174. Amy Louise Erickson states that 45% of married women could expect to be widowed and many would remarry, *Women and Property in early modern England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 154.

¹⁵ *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (London, 1529? (sic.); extracted in Joan Larsen Klein (ed. and intro.), *Daughters, Wives and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640* (Urbana and Chicago, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 97-122, at 121.

their enemy none occasion to say ill by them' (Klein, 122). William Gouge, writing in the early seventeenth century, deals with the same biblical sources, but his emphasis is different. He says that men and women who have lost a wife or husband are 'as free [to marry] as they who were neuer before married'.¹⁶ He says that St. Paul said: '...a woman, when her husband is dead, is at liberty to be married (I. Cor. 7.39) yea speaking of young widowes he further saith, *I will that they marie* (I. Tim. 5.14) (187). Where Vives sees marriage as a last resort for the widow who cannot control her lust and remarriage for a young widow as necessary to preserve her reputation, Gouge speaks in terms of equal rights for both women and men, and finds 'no restraint from a third, or fourth, or more mariages...' (187).

Other early seventeenth century writers strongly advised widows to remain single. Sir Thomas Overbury, for example, argues, that 'A Virtuous Widow' first marries 'that she might have children' and 'for their sakes she marries no more'.¹⁷ This idealised widow is not moved by rank or fortune, would feel shamed to change her name from her late husband's, believes his ghost would walk 'should she not perform his will', and her 'latter chastity...is more grave and reverend than that ere she was married, for in it is neither hope, nor longing, nor fear, nor jealousy' (Keeble, 253). Overbury compares her with an 'Ordinary Widow': 'The end of her husband begins in tears, and the end of her tears begins in a husband'; and her fancy is 'for one of the biggest of the Guard...' (254).

Richard Braithwait is even more restrictive:

Great difference then is there betwixt those widows who live alone and retire themselves from public concourse, and those which frequent the company of men. For a widow to love society, albeit her intentions relish nothing but sobriety, gives speedy wings to spreading infamy....Do not complain that you are desolate or alone. Modesty affecteth silence and secrecy; a chaste woman solitariness and privacy.¹⁸

As Ferdinand says to Bosola, the Duchess is 'a young widow' (1.2.179); but she has a child from her marriage to the Duke of Malfi and thus falls into the category of widows who, according to Overbury, have an especial duty to remain single; they married to bear children and their life after marriage should be devoted to them. Instead, she is a 'lusty widow' (1.2.262). The language of Ferdinand and the Cardinal is reminiscent of Overbury's disgust at the idea of widows remarrying and of his concern that lust drives them to do so.

¹⁶ *Of Domesticall Duties*, 186-187. Gouge writes:

The law doth not only permit a widow to marie again: but if her husband died before he had any children, it commanded the next kinsman that was liuing and free to marie her, that he might raise vp seed to his brother deceased: which if he refused to doe, a penalty of ignominy was inflicted on him: the widow reiected was to loose his shooe from his foot, and to spit in his face in the presence of the Elders. (186-187)

¹⁷ *A Wife* (1614), extracted in N. H. Keeble (ed. and intro.), *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 253-254.

¹⁸ *The English Gentlewoman* (London, 1631), extracted in Klein, 233-256, at 252-253.

Both brothers express their loathing for the idea of her engaging in future sexual activity and their expectation that, as a widow, this is exactly what she will desire:

Ferdinand: You are a widow:
 You know already what man is: and therefore
 Let not youth, high promotion, eloquence—
 Cardinal: No, nor anything without the addition, Honour
 Sway your high blood.
 Ferdinand: Marry? they are most luxurious,
 Will wed twice....
 Their livers are more spotted
 Than Laban's sheep. (1.2.217-223)

When the Duchess insists that she will never marry, the words of Overbury quoted above about the speed with which widows remarry are echoed in the reply of the Cardinal: 'So most widows say:/ But commonly that motion lasts no longer/ Than the turning of an hourglass; the funeral sermon/ And it, end both together' (1.2.226-229). The brothers continue their argument in which disdain for women's sexuality, expressed in words like 'rank pasture' (1.2.230) and 'irregular crab' (1.2.242), is coupled with threats that secret lust will be revealed: 'Your darkest actions: nay your privat'st thoughts,/ Will come to light' (1.2.238-239). Later in the play when the Duchess is imprisoned, the idea of Braithwait, that widows should live retired, appears in the words of Ferdinand: 'It had been well,/ Could you have liv'd thus always: for indeed/ You were too much i'th' light' (4.1.40-42).

But the brothers cannot be seen as simply exemplifying opposition to widows remarrying. The Duchess has married below her rank. Although Gouge accepts the rights of all widows to remarry, he is not prepared that they should marry outside their station because the man must rule within the family: 'Some equalitie in outward estate and wealth is also befitting the parties..., lest the disparitie therein (especially if it be ouer-great) make the one insult ouer the other more than is meet...'

And if a rich woman marry a poore man, she will looke to be the master, and to rule him: so as the order whch God hath established will be cleane peruerted, and the honour of mariage laid in the dust. For where no order is, there can be no honour. (189-190)

In relation to marriages between 'women of noble bloud, and great estate,...with their seruingmen' (191), Gouge displays the same fear of lustful widows which is apparent in the writings of other early seventeenth century moralists like Overbury and Braithwait: 'Doe they not herein bewray much basenesse of minde, and violence of lusts?' (191). Antonio is the Duchess's steward, in one sense a 'servingman' but, as Bosola tells him, 'a duke was your cousin-german, remov'd' (2.1.101-102).¹⁹ He is expert at jousting, taking 'the ring oft'nest' (1.2.6-7). Ferdinand describes him as 'Our sister Duchess' great master of her household' (1.2.8-9). He appears to have estates but may have gained these through his marriage to the Duchess; when Delio asks Antonio what 'your graver heads, /Which would be politic' think of him, he says: 'They do observe I grow to infinite purchase/ The left-hand way, and all suppose the Duchess/ Would amend it, if she could' (3.1.26-30).

¹⁹ First cousin, see 2.1.101, fn.

This figure is a very different one from that envisaged by Ferdinand when, knowing that his sister has borne a child but not to whom, he engages in violent fantasies about finding her with her lover, speculating, in words reminiscent of Overbury's reference to the widow's preference 'for one of the biggest of the Guard' (254), that the lover will turn out to be:

Happily,...some strong-thigh'd bargeman;
Or one o'th' wood-yard, that can quoit the sledge
Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire
That carries coals up to her privy lodgings. (2.5.43-46)

Once Antonio's connection with the Duchess is understood by Ferdinand, he describes Antonio as:

A slave, that only smell'd of ink and counters,
And nev'r in's life look'd like a gentleman,
But in the audit time:... (3.3.71-73)

When he first hears that the Duchess has given birth, the Cardinal disagrees with Ferdinand whose immediate response is to denounce the Duchess as 'a notorious strumpet' (2.5.4), kill her and 'toss her palace 'bout her ears,.../ And lay her general territory as waste,/ As she hath done her honour's' (2.5.18-21). The Cardinal asks: 'Shall our blood?/ The royal blood of Aragon and Castile? Be thus attainted?' (2.5.21-23). For Ferdinand, family honour depends on what has taken place. For the Cardinal, it seems more a matter of public knowledge.

Ferdinand's motivation is complicated. He makes a point of refusing to tell Bosola why he does not wish the Duchess to remarry:

Ferdinand: ...she's a young widow,
I would not have her marry again.
Bosola: ...No, sir?
Ferdinand: Do not you ask the reason: but be satisfied,
I say I would not. (1.2.179-182)

Later, he states that he wanted her to remain single to ensure an inheritance for himself (4.2.280-285); except that he speaks of 'a stream of gall quite through my heart' (4.2.285). Clifford Leech argued that Ferdinand's behaviour implies incestuous desire for his sister:

The grossness of his language to her in Act I, the continued violence of his response to the situation, his holding back from identifying her husband and, when that identity is established, from killing him until the Duchess is dead, his momentary identification of himself with her first husband, his necrophily in Act V—all these things...seem to point in one direction.²⁰

Frank Wigham argues, however, that it is 'the maintenance of institutional forms', rather than 'sex relations' which is at stake so that 'Ferdinand's incestuous inclination towards his sister is a *social posture*, of hysterical compensation—a

²⁰ Webster: *The Duchess of Malfi: Studies in English Literature* 8 (London: Edward Arnold, 1963), quoted in Frank Wigham, 'Incest and Ideology: *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614)', David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, (eds and intro.), *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 263-274, at 266.

desperate expression of the desire to evade degrading association with inferiors' (266).

The Cardinal has been so blatantly corrupt in his attempts to become Pope that he has failed in his purpose (1.2.87-90). He has a mistress and eventually murders her. Neither of them has any moral ground from which to criticise the Duchess. But just after the Duchess is stricken by eating the green apricots, Bosola and a group of servants make jokes about 'a Switzer in the Duchess' bedchamber....With a pistol in his great cod-piece' (2.2.36-39); and when Delio returns to court after a long absence, Antonio reports to him that 'The common rabble do directly say/ She is a strumpet' (3.1.25-26). Perceptions of her behaviour as inappropriate thus extend beyond her brothers.

The sense of uncertainty surrounding the motivation and behaviour of the Duchess and the concerns of her brothers also applies to the form of her marriage. As discussed in Chapter One, the early seventeenth century saw a greater emphasis on the need for marriages to be celebrated in public, in church, following the publication of banns. The older practice of creating a binding marriage through a verbal contract is specifically referred to by the Duchess: 'I have heard lawyers say, a contract in a chamber,/ *Per verba de presenti*, is absolute marriage' (1.2.394-395). She and Antonio, in the presence of Cariola, exchange loving vows which they regard as constituting a marriage contract. The Duchess denies any need for sanctification of their marriage in church: 'What can the Church force more?' (1.2.404); 'How can the Church build faster? We now are man and wife, and 'tis the Church/ That must but echo this' (1.2.407-409). But the Duchess then suggests that, when they go to the marriage bed, she and Antonio should simply talk together and that he should: 'Lay a naked sword between us, keep us chaste' (1.2.415-417), as if in recognition of the doubt expressed by moralists about sexual relations after a contract but before a church ceremony. No mention is ever made of any church involvement and the next time the Duchess appears she is pregnant.

The birth of the Duchess's children is secret and although she is attended by her ladies and a midwife, the process is irregular. As discussed in Chapter Four, in my account of *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, the image of the midwife-as-witch must be balanced against what is known of female midwives in London in the seventeenth century: respectable professional women, licensed by the church. The old lady who acts as the midwife in *The Duchess of Malfi* plays a minor role. She operates secretly, and there is a sense of panic and confusion attached to the birth of the first child, brought on by the Duchess's gorging on green fruit. The old lady is associated with costumes and disguise; for example, she mends the Duchess's ruff (2.1.117) and Bosola accuses her of 'painting' (2.1.24), calling her closet a 'a shop of witchcraft' (2.1.39). I will return to the theatricality of costume and disguise later in this chapter. Such a midwife, officiating at a birth which runs contrary to the wishes of the church, as represented by the Cardinal, thus represents the witch-like reverse of the London midwives.

'I am going into a wilderness'

The Duchess finds herself, like other pregnant women in early seventeenth century drama, in an uncertain social and moral space, partly determined to go her own way

and partly unsure about stepping outside the boundaries of proper behaviour. In Act 2, scene 1, the Duchess 'draws a traverse to reveal Antonio' in an inner chamber and goes on to create that space as a site where they can safely be married.²¹

The Duchess rejects the claims of her family to regulate her choice of marriage partner:

Shall this move me? If all my royal kindred
Lay in my way unto this marriage:
I'd make them my low foot-steps. (1.2.263-265)

This powerful sense of trampling on her opposition, even of raising herself up over her brothers, is contradicted, almost immediately, by her words to Cariola:

For I am going into a wilderness,
Where I shall find nor path, nor friendly clew
To be my guide. (1.2.281-283)

Then she tells Antonio, when he kneels, that he must raise himself, 'Or if you please, my hand to help you: so' (1.2.339). Later she says she must 'leave the path/ Of simple virtue, which was never made/ To seem the thing it is not' (1.2.365-367). Then she reassures him: 'All discord, without this circumference,/ Is only to be pitied, and not fear'd' (1.2.387-388).

Her chamber is the only space where the Duchess and Antonio can feel safe but, like the 'sanctuary' of her good name of which Antonio speaks (1.2.379-380), their freedom from fear in her chamber is illusory. The sense of her chamber as a safe space returns in Act 3, scene 2, when they joke with Cariola about whether they will 'sleep together' (3.2.9), but Ferdinand invades her chamber which becomes her place of imprisonment and she loses her power to control access to what should be her private space, unable to prevent the entry of Bosola and the lunatics. Her chamber has become a wilderness.

'Circumference' implies an enclosed space, from which the world can be excluded, like the Duchess's chamber, perhaps a space within her arms where Antonio can lie. But the enclosing circle is a sexual image, like the ring she places on Antonio's finger, and like her womb.²² The entry of the lunatics echoes the cry of the Duchess: 'I am / So troubled with the mother' (2.1.120-121), as if her loss of control involved in conception has made possible the invasion of her body by madness. In another sense, the intrusion into the Duchess's chamber is comparable to a gang rape. 'Circumference' can also evoke a theatrical space, the wooden 'O', as discussed later in this chapter.

'I observe our Duchess is sick a days'

In the plays discussed so far, the pregnant woman's condition is made apparent by her bodily signs, especially her rounding stomach but, in the early modern medical literature, a swollen stomach is not the most obvious sign of pregnancy. Consistent

²¹ See stage direction at line 1.2.283.

²² Karin S. Coddon discusses Bosola's infiltration of the Duchess's privacy as 'more than a little voyeuristic, as it involves the visual penetration of a private female space', *The Duchess of Malfi: Tyranny and Spectacle in Jacobean Drama*, Callaghan (ed. and intro.), *The Duchess of Malfi*, 25-45, at 32.

with the uncertainty surrounding the actions of the Duchess, the signs of pregnancy in *The Duchess of Malfi* are ambiguous.

As discussed in Chapter One, a woman's husband can tell that she is pregnant, because of special pleasure during intercourse, with the sensation that the womb has sucked or drawn at the end of his penis; another sign is 'if he returne from the field of nature not ouer-moyst' (Guillemeau, 3). Guillemeau finds none of the signs taken from the woman conclusive, in itself, but, taken together, they are likely to demonstrate pregnancy. Like her husband, the woman should look for sensations of especial pleasure during intercourse and no discharge afterwards, accompanied by 'yawning and stretching', 'shaking or quivering', and pain at the navel, rumbling in the lower abdomen and 'a kind of tickling', as the womb shrinks (4). After a few days the woman feels vomiting 'carelesse and qualmish, longing after strange things, finding her belly fallen and growne flat' as it sucks itself in to close the womb (4-5). At this early stage, a flat belly, not a swollen one, is a sign of pregnancy.

However, according to Guillemeau, very soon after conception, the woman will display a swollen belly; usually menstruation will cease; she will have hollow, sunken eyes with bluish whites, enlarged veins in the neck and painful swollen breasts, from which some milk can be expressed, with firm nipples, red for a boy, 'blackish' for a girl (5). Her urine may turn white, with a rainbow cloud at the top, 'or of an Opall colour', and sediment at the bottom which develops 'flocks', when shaken 'like to carded wooll'; near the end of her term the urine will be red because of retained menstrual blood; or if her urine is mixed with white wine, it will look like bean broth (5-6). Certain drinks may cause her to feel gripes in the belly (6). She may also have conceived if she loses her sense of smell for foul odours or sleeps all night with a clove of garlic in her mouth and cannot taste it in the morning (6). Also, some women lose an interest in sex (7). Guillemeau regards all these signs as less useful than the mother's sensation of feeling the child move in her womb and the evidence, drawn from an internal examination by a midwife, that her womb has closed tight (6-7).²³

Guillemeau's master, Ambroise Paré, describes similar signs to detect pregnancy to those listed by Guillemeau, but with slightly different emphases. What might appear to be the quintessential outward sign of pregnancy, a swollen belly, is not mentioned by Paré as a sign and, unlike Guillemeau, Paré does not comment on the flat belly in the very early stages of pregnancy, immediately after the womb has closed.²⁴ Paré recommends that to achieve conception, the man should keep in position after intercourse, to avoid the seeds being affected by the air before they have mixed, but does not accord any special prescience to the man in detecting conception during intercourse (889). He also singles out, as signs of pregnancy, some aspects of discomfort and evidence of ill-health: sleepiness; a pale face, spots and freckles;

²³ Guillemeau is especially cautious about the reliability of tests to determine the sex of the foetus, often related to the position of the child in the womb, a boy child on the right, a girl on the left. But he argues that the mother of a boy child has a better colour and she will be healthier and more nimble during the pregnancy; women with girl children get red spots on their faces and are 'wayward, fretful and sad' (10).

²⁴ *Of the Generation of Man*, 890. But Paré's discussion of moles, true and false, indicates that a swollen belly in a woman may be so obvious as an indication of pregnancy that he finds it unnecessary to list it, 925-929.

depression; sore teeth and gums; fainting; loss of appetite (especially for meats 'of good juice'); sluggishness and heaviness; and constipation; she craves 'illaudable meates' (890). Guillemeau, who devotes many chapters to these illnesses associated with pregnancy, treats them less as ways of testing that the woman is pregnant and more as consequences of her condition (33 and Chapters 8-17).

Jane Sharp is confident, however, that:

...if a womans courses be stopt, and the Veins under her lower Eyelid swell, and the colour be changed, and she hath not broken her rest by watching the night before; these signs seldom or never fail of Conception, for the first two months. (104)

But she gives fourteen rules for detecting pregnancy, very similar to the tests described by Guillemeau, 'too general to be certainly proved in all women, yet some of them seldom fail in any' (102-104). *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged* also expresses confidence in the midwife's capacity to diagnose pregnancy. The signs, similar to the other lists, are described as 'certain and apparent' (78).

Some authors thus interpret as confusing what others treat as simple although there is no great difference between the signs enumerated by different scholars. What is consistent is that it is women, rather than men, who have the best methods of diagnosis, methods which do not depend on outward appearances. The quickening foetus provides bodily sensations to the mother, and the midwife's internal examination enables her to support the mother's claims. Men, even medical practitioners, do not have access to the same information, except the husbands known to Guillemeau, who knew about their own sensations. As if to balance the superior knowledge of women in detecting their own pregnancies, through bodily sensations, there is the dangerous possibility, discussed in Chapters Two and Three, that a woman with a swollen belly might suffer from excess wind or some other form of false conception.

Bosola describes his suspicion that the Duchess is pregnant, in Act 2, scene 1:

...I observe our Duchess
Is sick a-days, she pukes, her stomach seethes,
The fins of her eyelids look most teeming blue,
She wanes i'th'cheek, and waxes fat i'th'flank;
And, contrary to our Italian fashion,
Wears a loose-bodied gown: there's somewhat in't. (2.1.67-72)

Later in the scene he says:

A whirlwind strike off these bawd farthingales,
For, but for that, and the loose-bodied gown,
I should have discover'd apparently
The young springal cutting a caper in her belly. (2.1.152-155)

The Duchess is 'fat i'th' flank', her face is thin, her eyelids are blue and she vomits and has a seething stomach.²⁵

Bosola thinks the Duchess is pregnant but the physical evidence might indicate a different condition. He has been appointed to spy on the Duchess to ensure she does

²⁵ Given Bosola's concern about the concealing nature of the clothes worn by the Duchess, the seething stomach does not refer to the appearance of the Duchess but to her behaviour.

not remarry but, within the household of a royal woman, a man appointed as master of the horse does not automatically have access to information about what occurs in her bedchamber unless he has a spy among her woman. Without the knowledge that she engages in sexual activity, let alone about whether she has ceased to menstruate, the colour of her urine or the shape and colour of her breasts, he is left to judge her appearance and behaviour. Her clothes, 'contrary to our Italian fashion', obscure her appearance, implying that there must be another reason for wearing them. Such clothes were fashionable at the court of James I, around the time of the first performances of the play, so that audiences at Blackfriars and the Globe, who wore different clothes, could be amused by vague hints about why women at the court wore the clothes they did.²⁶

Bosola's words suggest that because the clothes worn by the Duchess could conceal a pregnancy, this counts as proof that there must be a pregnancy to conceal: 'there's somewhat in't'. Bosola speaks of 'bawd farthingales' because the massive skirt, supported by rods was associated with secret pregnancies, rumoured to have been invented by a Portugese Queen to conceal an unwanted pregnancy; similar comments were made about other royal women.²⁷ His words suggest that the Duchess wears a costume to cover the results of illicit sexuality, in line with his earlier comments to the old lady about 'painting': 'to behold thee not painted inclines somewhat near a miracle. These in thy face here, were deep ruts and foul sloughs, the last progress' (2.1.26-29). Like paint, clothing can cover over flaws. Like the 'crack...in my dread mistress' (1.2.324), which Camillo denies in *The Winter's Tale*, both ruts in a women's skin and the flaw of pregnancy covered by her clothing can be linked to her genitalia.

²⁶ By the time the play was performed at court in the 1630's, fashions had changed. As for the fashions worn during pregnancy, historians of clothing suggest that 'these were usually adaptations of the fashions of the time, perhaps simplified' Phillis C. Cunningham and Catherine Lucas (Barbara Phillipson and Phillis Cunningham, illust.), *Costume for Births, Marriages & Deaths* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1972), 14.

²⁷ Kimberley Chrisman, 'Unhoop the Fair Sex: The Campaign Against the Hoop Petticoat in Eighteenth-Century England'. *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 30:1 (1996). 5-23. Chrisman comments that 'farthingale' came from the Portugese 'verdugo', meaning 'something supported by rods' and the *verdugo* may well have originated because heavy fabrics from the East required a framework to support them (7). For an example of a farthingale, see Portrait of Mary, Lady Scudamore', by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, 1614-1615, reproduced in Aileen Ribeiro and Valerie Cumming, *The Visual History of Costume* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1989), Illustration 63, at 103. See also, Karen Hearn (ed.), *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England* (London: Tate Publishing, 1996): Portrait of Diana Cecil, Countess of Oxford, attributed to William Larkin, c. 1614-1618, Plate 136, at 201; Portrait of Anne of Denmark painted by Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger in 1611-1614, Plate 130, at 193.

In practical terms, the tiny-waisted farthingales which were still fashionable at court in the time of James I, demanded very tight lacing, making them unsuitable garments for pregnant women on grounds of comfort and potential damage to the foetus; and not particularly suitable for concealing a pregnancy.²⁸

Also whatsoever preseth or girdeth in the mothers belly, and therewith also the wombe that is within it, as those ivory or Whale-bone buskes, which women were on their bodies thereby to keep down their bellies; by these and such like things the childe is letted or hindred from growing to his full strength, so that by expression, or as it were by compulsion, hee is often forced to come forth before the legitimate and lawfull time. (Paré, 921)

The son born to the Duchess and Antonio is premature but not damaged. In any case, Bosola treats the farthingale as a concealing garment and portraits survive, from the period, of women wearing farthingales in which it would be very difficult to know whether or not they were pregnant.²⁹ A loose-bodied gown, hanging from the shoulders, could certainly assist in covering a swelling belly. If the two were combined, as they are in Bosola's description of the Duchess, the outfit would have been very effective in concealing pregnancy or at least making it difficult for someone not in the know to get a clear picture.³⁰

'I have a trick may chance discover it,/ A pretty one; I have bought some apricocks,/ The first our spring yields'

Because he cannot decide whether or not the Duchess is pregnant simply by her appearance, Bosola also observes her behaviour.³¹ He takes advantage of the well-known fact that pregnant women suffer from 'the Pica', a craving for 'illaudable meates', for example, 'coales, dirt, ashes, stinking salt-fish, sowre, austere and tart fruits, pepper, vinegar, and such like acride things....' (Paré, 890). Guillemeau includes 'old Shoes' among the unusual substances a pregnant woman may crave (35). Sharp includes a desire to 'bite off a piece of their Husbands Buttocks' (103).

Guillemeau is clear that women should 'refraine and ouer-maister themselues...' from giving in to their cravings, both for the sake of their own health and that of their child (20-21). But, '...if they cannot forbear, suffer them a little, and let them haue their longings, for feare least it should proue worse with them' (21). To deny the woman

²⁸ Audrey Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, states that 'all authors combined to condemn strait-lacing and stiff whalebone busks, which caused injury to the breasts, stunted and deformed the child's growth, and made the belly after childbirth wrinkled and pendent', 62.

²⁹ Portraits also survive of women wearing farthingales in which it would be very difficult to know whether or not they were pregnant; see for example, 'Elizabeth Finch, Countess of Winchelsea', Marcus Gheerearts the Younger, 1600, Hearn, Illustration 122, at 180.

³⁰ Phillis Cunningham and Catherine Lucas comment: 'As for the clothes worn during pregnancy, these were usually adaptations of the fashions of the time, perhaps simplified, *Costume for Births, Marriages & Deaths* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972), 14. A portrait of an unknown woman, in an advanced state of pregnancy appears in Ribeiro and Cumming, Illustration 136, 'Unknown lady, c. 1595, W. Segar (attrib.), 126. Her dress is fashionable but looks comfortable.

³¹ For a discussion of the construction of 'pregnancy', through an ambiguous appearance supported by 'typically pregnant behaviour', see my article: "'Is she or isn't she?': *The Duchess of Malfi* and the late Diana, Princess of Wales", Jacqueline Lo, Duncan Beard, Rachel Cunneen and Debjani Ganguly (eds), Jacqueline Lo (intro.), *Impossible Selves: Cultural Readings of Identity* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1999), 146-156.

what she craves might bring on early labour; or the child, when born, might carry the marks of what their mother craved and was denied (21). The relaxation of control in cases of the Pica is allowed to secure the well-being of the child, but the cravings themselves reinforce the need for control. When Guillemeau makes suggestions for food to tempt the pregnant woman suffering from the Pica, it is clear that he thinks in terms of containing her: 'therefore wee must set an edge (as it were) on their appetite' (37-38).

Bosola relies on 'apricocks' to test the Duchess:

I have a trick, may chance discover it,
A pretty one; I have bought some apricocks,
The first our spring yields. (2.1.73-75)

The Duchess cannot control her desire but devours the 'apricocks' 'greedily' (2.1.151) and Bosola is able to confirm his suspicion that she is pregnant. He decides there are 'apparent signs of breeding', because of her 'tetchiness' and her 'vulturous eating of the apricocks' (2.2.1-3). Compared with coal, dirt, ashes, old shoes and the like, apricots are not particularly unusual, so Bosola's choice gives the Duchess's craving a specifically sexual element. Dictionaries of slang and bawdy date the first use of 'cock' for penis at 1618, with the powerful implication that uncontrollable lust is both the cause and effect of pregnancy.³² The desire of a pregnant woman for apricots can thus be equated with the desire, mentioned by Sharp, of the women who wanted 'to bite off a piece of their Husbands Buttocks'. The comment by the Duchess: 'No, they taste of musk, methinks; indeed they do' (2.1.140), also imparts to the apricots the penetrating, persistent odour of musk, a substance obtained from musk-deer, and used in the highest-quality and most sexually provocative perfumes; to add to the complexity, musk is also used in embalming.³³

While apricots are not unusual as food, green apricots can be poisonous; and these apricots are said to have been ripened in horse dung (2.1.144). Cariola has already likened the Duchess's secret marriage to poison and Bosola associates a swollen stomach through eating unripe fruit with the swelling of pregnancy, in his aside 'Nay, you are too much swell'd already' in response to the Duchess's 'This green fruit and my stomach are not friends./ How they swell me!' (2.1.158-159). To reinforce the warnings that pregnant women who give way to the Pica might bring on early labour, this is what happens to the Duchess, giving Bosola certain proof that she was pregnant. She is not away from Malfi for the birth, as planned. He hears a child cry; and he finds Antonio's horoscope for the child.

Apart from the signs of her uncontrolled appetite, the Duchess also acts recklessly, engaging in a performance calculated to draw attention to the very details she should conceal. She says: 'I am/ So troubled with the mother' (2.1.120-121); and makes pointed references to how fat and short-winded she is, linking her condition to that of the Duchess of Florence when, as Bosola knows, the Duchess was pregnant (2.1.112-116). It is thus the way that the Duchess behaves, rather than her appearance, which

³² John Ayto and John Simpson, *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 39; Eric Partridge, Paul Beale (ed.), *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 8th edition, 1984), 232.

³³ See *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 1375, Sense 1. See also *Standard International Encyclopedia* (New York and Washington: United Publishing Corporation, 1970), Vol. II., 1702, under 'Musk Deer'.

conclusively discloses her pregnancy. And the manner of that disclosure, brought on by her inability to put an edge upon her appetites, fixes her as a pregnant woman with all the lack of control that pregnancy implies.

‘The young springal cutting a caper in her belly’

The Duchess of Malfi, like *The Winter’s Tale* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, is notable for the production of children on stage who are the supposed result of a stage pregnancy. These stage children may be more effective as a living demonstration of the sexual activity leading to their conception than a figure on stage which bears the physical appearance of a pregnant woman. At least, the appearance of a child on stage provides strong confirmation that the sexual act took place. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the children appear with their parents. Their younger son and their daughter are killed with the Duchess. The older boy, the son born of the pregnancy depicted on stage, is present at the end when Delio describes how he will seek to establish ‘this young hopeful gentleman/ In’s mother’s right’ (5.5.112-113). As discussed, this boy might be the Duke of Malfi in future or might precipitate more havoc because his claim is denied as illegitimate. His appearance at the end of the play is a reminder that the Duchess was pregnant and gave birth to him.

But this young boy has appeared, before his birth, in Bosola’s description of ‘the young springal cutting a caper’, the most vital image of a foetus in any of the plays discussed in this thesis. Bosola’s words present an image in stark contrast to the way the Duke speaks of Juliet’s foetus in *Measure for Measure*: ‘Repent you, fair one, of the sin you carry?’ (2.3.20). The ‘young springal’ is not only ‘quick’, but positively lively, far more a living child than, for example, the baby in the basket of meat in *A Chaste Maid*.

Perhaps because of its vitality, the image of the ‘young springal’ tends to downplay the body of the Duchess and to detract from her sexuality, as if the more intimate knowledge of the foetus makes the mother irrelevant. The more vividly the audience imagines the foetus, thus emphasising the Duchess as a woman who has engaged in sexual activity, the less important it is to imagine her sexual body. Karen Newman examines the history of representations of the foetus, including representations designed to illustrate different presentations of the foetus in the womb, most of them unusual or dangerous.³⁴ Newman explores the early modern practice of representing foetuses as seemingly autonomous, ‘wholly stylized, conventional, unrealistic homunculi, sometimes sticklike, sometimes pudgy, but always represented in fantastic gymnastic postures’ (27). She comments on the contrast between ‘the stereotypically passive female body-as-vessel and ‘a conversely active, always-represented-as-male fetus’ (29-33). In Eucharius Rösslin’s *The Birth of Mankind*, for example, the foetus is ‘plump and cherubic, jumping, dancing, diving, tumbling in unfettered freedom in a uterus represented diagrammatically’ (29).³⁵ Even in more elaborate representations of the foetus, as for example in the 1637 edition of Jacob

³⁴ *Fetal Positions: Individualism, Science, Visuality* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 27-82.

³⁵ As discussed in the Introduction, Eucharius Rösslin’s *The Birth of Man-kinde, Otherwise named the Woman’s Booke* is one of the older medical texts which was translated into English and regularly reissued. Newman uses illustrations from an edition in 1626, see Figures 18 and 19, at 29. Very similar illustrations are found in Sharp’s *The Midwives Book*, published in 1671; see illustrations facing pages 198-199.

Rueff's *The Expert Midwife*, 'the schema of the fully formed fetus actively negotiating the uterine environment and cut off from a female body endures' (33); Newman reproduces an illustration from Rueff, of twin boys standing together within a stylised uterus, one with his arm around the other's shoulder.³⁶

Not all illustrations of the foetus in the uterus represent the mother as irrelevant. For example, an illustration of 'The natural forme of a child lying in ye wombe' appears in *The Compleat Midwives Practice Enlarged* at the end of the contents pages. The woman's full body is depicted. It does not have obvious genitals because her belly opens out like a flower to reveal her uterus, itself opened out to reveal the foetus inside. Her face is turned slightly away and one of her hands is raised imperiously. Newman discusses illustrations of this kind, noting that 'presence, after all, is no guarantee' (68). She argues that anatomical representations usually treat the man's body as the norm so that an illustration of a woman's body, usually including a fully-formed foetus, emphasises her difference from a man, reducing her to her reproductive capacity (69).

Bosola's image is of a gymnastic foetus, operating independently of the Duchess, but which is also reminiscent of the illustrations depicting the woman's body opened out to reveal the contents of her uterus. Bosola's idea is that, without the Duchess's concealing clothes, he would be able to see a young man dancing inside her belly, as if her naked body did not itself have the capacity to conceal the foetus, even as it revealed her pregnancy. Her woman's body, including her genitals, is irrelevant, except as a notional vessel for the notional womb inside her, with the foetus inside it. The idea, so prevalent in illustrations in the medical texts, that it should be possible to know the foetus, without also knowing the woman's body, is powerfully conveyed in Bosola's attitude, as if to deny the privileged access that women have to knowledge about their own bodies. Even as his words stress the need to watch her behaviour, because her clothing obscures the perfect vision that would otherwise be available, there is a sense that her woman's body is less significant.

Bosola's image may be lively but it is not life-like. As Newman observes, the gymnastic illustrations of the foetus in the early modern texts are unrealistic because they represent the foetus as operating independently of its mother and exercising a degree of physical control which is impossible for a foetus or for a new-born baby. The pictures look nothing like a foetus or a baby, being more akin to tiny adults or cherubs. Because pregnancy takes place inside the womb, itself an enclosed space inside the woman's body, no accurate image of a foetus in the womb was possible in the early modern period. The best opportunity accorded to early modern practitioners to observe a foetus was after an abortion or when a pregnant woman died. The various presentations within the womb which the gymnastic figures illustrate could best be observed on the dissecting table. The lively, independent figures in the illustrations were thus in grim contrast to the dead flesh to which the illustrators had access.

³⁶ As discussed in the Introduction, Rueff's work also was translated into various languages, and reprinted regularly; Newman uses a 1637 version. Like the twin boys, the figure in Guillemeau's *Child-Birth* at the head of page 156 appears to be standing unsupported. The twins at the beginning of Chapter XXII in Guillemeau are depicted as adults, 169.

By describing such images as unrealistic, it is not proposed that it is possible to present 'fully realistic' images of a foetus: as if 'the fleshly body of the dissecting table' can be effectively separated from 'the cultural body of history' (Newman, 3). Newman explicitly disputes the description by Thomas Laqueur of his experience, as a medical student, faced with the flesh '*really* there' on a dissecting table after studying 'schematic anatomical illustrations'.³⁷ In her view, 'the real...is saturated by all sorts of contingencies: perceptual, temporal, historical, ideological' (Newman, 4). But her exposure of the manipulation by anti-abortionists of modern technology, to highlight the human characteristics of foetuses in the early stages of development, demonstrates that some representations of foetal life are more unrealistic than others. While modern technology allows much greater access to the foetus in the womb, many of the images used by the anti-abortionists to demonstrate 'life' are taken from aborted foetuses (11-15).³⁸

I discussed above the parallels between the chamber of the Duchess and her womb. Bosola's description of the foetus converts the womb of the Duchess into part of a theatre; the 'circumference' of which she spoke (1.2.387), having special resonances at performances at the Globe Theatre, where the play was performed in 1614. In his image, her clothes are like a curtain which, when pulled back, discloses the figure concealed in an inner recess. In Act 1, scene 2, the inner space is the site for the marriage of the Duchess. As noted she draws the traverse to reveal Antonio. Again, in Act 4, scene 1, within the chamber of the Duchess, Bosola and Ferdinand discuss her and then Bosola draws the 'traverse' to reveal her with Cariola and servants.³⁹ Later, after Ferdinand gives her the dead man's hand: 'Here is discover'd behind a traverse, the artificial figures of Antonio and his children; appearing as if they were dead'.⁴⁰ As he has described his imaginary image of the foetus, as a performance of life, in an aside to the audience, Bosola now describes the wax figures to the Duchess, as a performance of death: 'He [Ferdinand] doth present you this sad spectacle, / That now you know directly they are dead' (4.1.57-58).

Neither image described by Bosola is completely true or false. The dancing foetus is created by his imaginative power, while the waxworks represent something that has not taken place. But, although he cannot see the foetus, the boy-child is born and may dance into a Dukedom; and Antonio and two of the children die. Bosola's images thus might be said to represent the greater reality of theatrical representation over 'life'. The Duchess seems to favour theatre over life in her claim that: 'it wastes me more, / Than were't my picture, fashion'd out of wax, / Stuck with a magical needle, and then buried / In some foul dunghill' (4.1.62-65).

The body of the Duchess is converted by Bosola's words into nothing more than a space behind her clothes in which a puppet-like image is displayed. Within the womb of the Duchess, this puppet figure performs a frivolous and irresponsible dance, so that the body politic of the Duchess is obscured along with her sexual body.

³⁷ *Making Sex*, 14.

³⁸ Early modern illustrations and current anti-abortion propaganda are similar, both in obliterating the woman's body and in presenting the foetus so as to highlight its human characteristics; but the gymnastic ability of the early modern foetus has given way to the vulnerable figure that requires defence.

³⁹ See stage direction following 4.1.17; no such direction appears in the 1623 edition.

⁴⁰ See stage direction following 4.1.55; this is included in the 1623 edition.

Her chamber becomes the site of madness and irresponsibility when the springal cutting a caper is paralleled by the dance of madmen 'with music answerable thereunto'.⁴¹ To heighten the association of 'cutting a caper' with lunacy and terror, the doctor and Ferdinand both speak, at the height of Ferdinand's possession by 'lycanthropy', of 'fetching a frisk', that is, 'cutting a caper' (5.2.71, 75).⁴² The Duchess not only bears on her body, through her pregnancy, an active sign of her irresponsibility and disregard for convention, pregnancy is linked both to madness and to death.

The Duchess of Malfi thus represents a pregnant woman whose pregnancy is unconventional. While she cannot simply be classed as a typical 'lusty widow', her pregnancy is disclosed by behaviour which is associated with the lack of control displayed by pregnant women, as described by the medical authorities, mainly by 'the Pica', a craving linked to pregnancy and, in this case, represented through a desire for food linked to sexuality. She thus demonstrates the need to control pregnant women and the difficulties involved in doing so. She is represented as a woman with strong sexual desires, but as the play progresses, her sexual body tends to be obscured by parallels between the inner space in her chamber, her womb, and the theatre.

The pregnant boy in *The Duchess of Malfi*

In 'The Act, the Role and the Actor', McLuskie argues that:

the fictions of Elizabethan drama would have been rendered nonsensical if at every appearance of a female character—say Ursula the pig woman or the Duchess of Malfi—their gender was called into question. (121)

McLuskie does not simply dismiss the potential impact of boys in women's parts but she disagrees with what she sees as a disproportionate emphasis, by scholars like Jardine, on performance to the detriment of the dramatic. As discussed in the Introduction, Jardine herself did not expect that playgoers were kept constantly aware of the 'cross-dressing implications of boys in "women's parts"'. Rather, the dramatist had available, as 'a reference point for dramatic irony, or more serious *double entendre*', the fact that the women were played by boys (*Still Harping*, 12). Jardine finds that the 'eroticism of the boy player is invoked in the drama whenever it is openly alluded to', usually 'in comedy, where role-playing and disguise is part of the genre' (23). In tragedy, the boy actor's presence is usually not alluded to. She

⁴¹ See stage direction following line 4.2.115; this is included in the 1623 edition.

⁴² See note to 5.2.71. Ferdinand's behaviour is also associated with the uncontrolled behaviour of the pregnant woman. According to the doctor, in those possessed with 'lycanthropy':

...there o'erflows
Such melancholy humour, they imagine
Themselves to be transformed into wolves,
Steal forth to churchyards in the dead of night,
And dig dead bodies up: as two night since
One met the Duke, 'bout midnight, in a lane/
Behind St Mark's church, with the leg of a man
Upon his shoulder....(5.2.8-15)

Ferdinand, like the Duchess when she was pregnant, is troubled with something which takes over his body, very like 'the mother'; and his desire to eat a man's leg demonstrates all the inappropriate desire for 'illaudable meates' which signify the Pica.

makes an exception for *Edward II*, by Christopher Marlowe, because attention is drawn systematically to sexual dalliance in terms which are precisely symmetrical for Edward/ Gaveston and Edward/ Isabella (23). No such references exist in *The Duchess of Malfi* and it seems likely that Jardine, and many other scholars, would agree with McLuskie that it is not a play where the boy actor is relevant. Peter Stallybrass, on the other hand, identifies references in tragedy, in *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, which require 'the audience to "see" particular body parts (the breast, the penis, the naked body)', but reveal that gender cannot be fixed but is indeterminable. 'Indeed all attempts to fix gender are necessarily *prosthetic*' ('Transvestism and the "body beneath"', 77).

The Duchess of Malfi makes insistent references to the body of the Duchess which, in my view, cannot be ignored, and which suggest implications which are not available when the Duchess is acted by a woman. Bosola's first description of why he thinks the Duchess is pregnant requires the audience to note the theatricality of the Duchess's appearance, her blue eyelids, her wan cheek, her fat flank, and her unfashionable, concealing clothes (2.1.67-72). While there is no evidence of how the boy who played the Duchess was dressed in original performances, arguably the appearance of the Duchess during this scene would have matched the ambiguity of Bosola's description. By stressing what he can see, he stresses her body as a woman's body, thus highlighting the difference between the role and the actor. Bosola's words are more than a comment or an invitation to the audience to join him in examining her body. He has been established as someone who will scrutinise her closely. He lacks full authority, having been in the galleys (1.1.35), and must observe the Duchess from the outside. He does not know the details of her marriage which are known to the audience. But he speaks as an authoritative observer, and in doing so, he directs audience attention to what can be seen. What he first describes are outward signs: her face and body and her sickness. All these can be described as prosthetic and theatrical, in the sense that flanks can be made fat by padding, blue eyelids can be applied as make-up and sickness can be acted.

The effect would have been to reinforce the uncertainties disclosed by medical authorities about the difficulties of diagnosing pregnancy. When the Duchess was played by a boy, these uncertainties about pregnancy would, by extension have suggested potential uncertainties involved in identifying the sex of another human, from outside their clothes. I have already discussed how Bosola implies that make-up provides a smooth outer surface over both indentations and protuberances, in his comments in Act 2, scene 1, about the way an outer surface can cover over a 'deep rut', and suggested that 'rut' implies a women's genitals, similar to the use by Polixenes of 'crack' to describe a flaw in the context of acted pregnancy (*The Winter's Tale*, 1.2.324). Rather than constituting a 'rut', a pregnancy stands out on the body, as the genitals of the boy actor are outside his body. But both can be covered by clothing and conveyed by a prosthesis, under clothing.⁴³

But the Duchess moves from being an outer surface made up of clothing so impenetrable that what lies beneath it cannot be seen. When Bosola says 'there's somewhat in't', he implies that although, from the outside, her pregnancy and her sex

⁴³ Bosola also speaks of a woman who 'flayed the skin off her face, to make it more level', changing her appearance from a 'nutmeg grater' to an 'abortive hedgehog' (2.1.30-32).

may be indeterminable, there is a 'truth' below. The truth, as early modern audiences knew, was not a woman, let alone a pregnant woman, but the 'little thing' of the boy actor. The prosthetic effect of clothes is emphasised further by 'bawd farthingales and the loose-bodied gown.' Bosola first forces audience attention onto the body of the Duchess, as a woman's body, probably pregnant, and in early performances would thus have drawn attention to the body of the boy playing her. His words create the indeterminacy identified by Stallybrass in *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. If the dramatic was favoured over performance, an early modern audience would have expected to see the rounded belly of a pregnant woman's body under her clothes. If more stress was placed on the performance aspects, what would have been imagined under her clothes was not a woman's body but a boy's body. The ambiguity of the Duchess's pregnant appearance, her ambivalent marital status, and the tension between her body politic and her sexual body, would all have been heightened by the indeterminacy of the boy/woman on stage.

But *The Duchess of Malfi* takes the indeterminate mode even further than the examples identified by Stallybrass, because Bosola describes two independent figures: a woman with her belly opened out and a boy child dancing inside her. The ambivalence that already existed between the Duchess and the boy actor would thus have been heightened by the second boy the audience was asked to imagine, as if the actor has managed to penetrate the body of the character and obliterate it. In such a situation, maintaining the belief in the Duchess as a pregnant woman would have been more difficult. I have already discussed the theatricality of the image of 'the young springall', because the Duchess's womb is described in terms which evoke her chamber and her chamber is an inner space which is revealed to the audience. The combined effect of this imagery and the boy actor would have been to stress that the Duchess was not a creature of flesh and blood. Like the illustrations in the medical texts, her body was presented as a space in which to imagine a foetus.

Chapter Six

Pregnancy as Excess: *Bartholomew Fair*

Bartholomew Fair, by Ben Jonson, is a city comedy, described by Ian Donaldson as an occasional play, that is, a play about a holiday occasion, designed for performance on two particular holidays (Halloween and All Saints' Day).¹ Compared to the Duchess of Malfi, who is secretly pregnant and tries to mask her pregnancy under fashionable court clothing, Win Littlewit uses a supposedly insatiable pregnant desire for pork, as a mask for her desire to see her husband's puppet play. Despite these differences, pregnancy in both plays is associated with unsuccessful attempts to impose control on women's bodies. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, it is the sexuality and marital status of the Duchess that her brothers try unsuccessfully to control. In *Bartholomew Fair*, the fair, through the body and the booth of Ursula, the pig woman, stands for the uncontrollable female body, and hence, by association, stands for the swelling pregnant body. It is consequently the fair which attracts attempts to control it, by the law, in the guise of Justice Overdo, and the Church, in the guise of Rabbi Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. Neither attempt is a success. But the fair also stands for the theatre.² Human procreation and theatrical creativity are linked through Win's 'acted pregnancy cravings' and the puppet play written by her husband, John Littlewit. The booth of Ursula, is like the inner space in the chamber of the Duchess, in that it appears to offer safety but is, in fact, dangerous.³

There are several issues on which scholars have commented, in discussing *Bartholomew Fair*, that are relevant to the acting of pregnancy. Gail Kern Paster focuses on the denigration of women through Win Littlewit's feigned longing for roast pork, her desperate need to use Ursula's chamber pot and the way she and

¹ *The World Upside-Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 48-49. All quotes are from Gordon Campbell (ed. and intro.), *Ben Jonson: The Alchemist and Other Plays* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 327-433. *Bartholomew Fair* was written c. 1614, but not printed until 1631, and not published until the Second Folio of 1640. Jonson worked on a version for the 1631 Folio which was printed but not distributed. The unpublished sheets were incorporated into the second edition of the *Workes* in 1640, so that the title page which refers to the 1614 performances is dated 1631. 'Not attaining the status of "literature", it remained until 1640 simply a play that had been performed in the popular theatre', Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (London: Methuen, 1986), 27-79, at 78. See also Introductory Note to *Bartholomew Fair* in Martin Butler (ed. and intro.), *The Selected Plays of Ben Jonson* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Vol. II, 151-152. The play was first performed on 31 October, 1614, at the Hope Theatre by the Lady Elizabeth's Men; and on 1 November, 1614, at Whitehall; see Campbell, xxiii, xxv1, Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, 400, 402, 412.

² Campbell says of *Bartholomew Fair* that 'it is the fair rather than any particular character that is at the centre of the action', Introduction, xxi.

³ For Stallybrass and White, *Bartholomew Fair* centres around pig, ambivalent, demonised and excluded by Busy and Dame Purecraft but also 'voraciously desired and devoured' (62-66); and thus around Ursula, the 'celebrant of the open orifice': mouth, belly, anus and genitals, orifices, which, to Bakhtin, 'have a common characteristic; it is within them that the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome.' Ursula is a go-between, as bawd, but also 'in the symbolic functioning of her bodily processes which move continuously between the inner and the outer' (65). To Patricia Parker, Ursula 'stands in some sense as a symbol for the fatness of the fair and its "fabled enormities", and thus also by extension for the world...'; she is connected to Circe and to women's genitals; she is 'not only fat but perpetually in heat', *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Text* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 24-26, at 24.

Dame Overdo are inveigled into prostitution. Paster argues that Littlewit seeks to 'sanction and justify his weakness by displacing it onto his wife and, through her, women at large' (*The Body Embarrassed*, 38). Lori Schroeder Haslem disagrees with Paster that Win wants to urinate in the chamber pot. She argues persuasively that Win wishes to defecate, as discussed later. I will also focus at a later point in this chapter, on Haslem's apparent disagreement with Paster, made evident by their use of language rather than by any specific statement about the status of Win's pregnancy: whether she is a pregnant woman who acts the insatiable longings of 'the Pica' or, alternatively, a non-pregnant woman who acts pregnancy by aping a stereotypical aspect of pregnant behaviour.⁴

Some critics are interested in the extent to which Jonson either attacked or supported the views and authority of James I against the London Corporation, which gained profits from the fair while attacking the theatres which operated under James's patronage.⁵ In comparing the fair and the theatre, I am not concerned with identifying the extent to which Jonson sought to uphold the royal prerogative or with exploring the implications of licence and licentiousness. My focus is on the acting of Win's pregnancy, the relationship between theatre and the maternal body and the implications of such a relationship for the theatrical representation of pregnancy. Thus the 'author' who is most relevant to my discussion of *Bartholomew Fair* is John Littlewit, author of the puppet play, of the dainty 'device' in which Win 'longs' to eat roast pork as a means of going to the fair and, possibly, author of her child.

As in earlier chapters, I will wait until the end of the chapter before I consider the implications, for the representation of pregnancy on stage, of the fact that the women in *Bartholomew Fair*, including Ursula, were originally played by boys or, in Ursula's case, possibly by a man.

'What manner of matter is this, Master Littlewit?'

In their exploration of 'authority' in *Bartholomew Fair*, scholars also examine the extent to which the play can be viewed as, itself, antitheatrical. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that Jonson sought to define a new authority based in authorship, 'in every way in contradiction to Saturnalia, the grotesque, even to the theatre, itself' (67, 77). But, they suggest, 'disgust bears the impress of desire, and Jonson found in the huckster, the cony-catcher and the pick-pocket an image of his own precarious and importuning craft' (77). The fact that *Bartholomew Fair* was not distributed in printed form during Jonson's life sums up the contradiction between 'its enormities, abominations and intimacy with "low" forms' and the image of the classical to which Jonson aspired (78).

⁴ "'Troubled with the Mother'": Longings, Purgings, and the Maternal Body in *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Modern Philology*, 92:4, (May 1995), 438-459, at 448.

⁵ See Leah Marcus, 'Pastimes and the Purging of Theater: *Bartholomew Fair* (1614)', David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (eds and intro.), *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (New York and London Routledge, 1991), 196-209. See also, Marcus, 'Of Mire and Authorship', David L Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington (eds and intro.), *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre, and Politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 170-181, at 177. Donaldson notes that some scholars have identified what might appear to be hostile references to James I. See, *The World Upside-Down*, 72-73.

Jonas Barish suggests that Jonson was concerned that people went to the theatre 'to parade their fine clothes and gape at those of their neighbours—to make spectacles of themselves, in fact, and so compete with the play'.⁶ But, he argues, when Jonson expressed concerns about other playwrights and theatrical techniques, he was not attacking theatre but seeking to reform it, by 'scouring off its excrescencies, restoring it to nature and truth, after its long bondage to false conventions' (135). Barish finds in *Bartholomew Fair* that a capacity 'to alchemize other human beings into their own agents—the power to create theatrical illusion....is shared,...as a kind of community magic, by all the Smithfield vendors, with their toy shops and gingerbread stalls, their pig tents and ale tables, their games and puppet shows' (153). It is the 'uneasy synthesis between a formal antitheatricalism, which condemns the arts of show and illusion on the one hand, and a subversive hankering after them on the other, that lends to Jonson's comic masterpieces much of their unique high tension and precarious equilibrium' (154). Laura Levine argues that *Bartholomew Fair* does not display any positive, even grudging, endorsement of theatre, for example when Busy is 'converted' by the puppet, but an 'anti-anti-theatricality'.⁷

When Bartholomew Cokes asks Littlewit: 'What manner of matter is this, Master Littlewit?' (5.3.44-45), he is speaking about the puppet play but his question is appropriate to *Bartholomew Fair*. Is it a play attacking theatre or a play attacking the antitheatricalists? I argue that *Bartholomew Fair* is both. It attacks the antitheatricalists and it also demonstrates the limitations of theatre as a means of conveying meaning because the author can lose control over the performance. The play depicts the pleasure fair at St Bartholomew as a form of theatre and exposes the antitheatricalists as hypocrites. The City fathers 'had opposed virtually all dramatic activity in and about London', but the profits from the pleasure fair went to the London Corporation (Leah Marcus, 'Pastimes', 200-201). The economic hypocrisy of the City is linked to a more general attack on 'Puritans' who denounced acting as hypocrisy: for example William Prynne wrote: 'For what else is *hypocrisie* in the proper signification of the word, *but the acting of anothers part or person on the Stage*'.⁸ Dame Purecraft and Busy are both exposed as hypocrites. Justice Overdo, Wasp and Busy, representing traditional sources of antitheatrical authority, are put in the stocks (Stallybrass and White, 65-66), confirming that opponents of the theatre are both excessive and ineffectual. By showing the fair and thus, by extension, theatre, as a place where lust flourishes and innocent people are corrupted, *Bartholomew Fair* mocks the antitheatricalists by depicting the vices they associated with theatre. The result would only have operated to vindicate their opinions, if any of them had seen it.

⁶ *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, 132-154, at 133. The epigraph from Horace's Epistles, quoted on the title page to *Bartholomew Fair* in the 1640 edition of Jonson's *Workes*, stresses the contribution of the audience to the spectacle:

If Democritus were still on earth, he would laugh: for he would look more intently at the people than at the play itself, as offering more shows by far: but as for the authors, he would think they were telling a tale to a deaf ass.

⁷ *Men in Women's Clothing*, 89-107, and fn. 25 at 165.

⁸ *Histriomastix*, (Sig. X3^v). For an analysis of the distinction between Puritans and 'stage-Puritans', see Patrick Collinson, 'The Theatre constructs Puritanism', Smith, Strier and Bevington (ed. and intro.), *The Theatrical City*, 157-169.

Some scenes could have been written by that erstwhile playwright, Stephen Gosson, who advised women that even to be visible at such an event is to invite moral danger. Visitors to London commented on the visibility of women outside the home, a phenomenon explained by Laura Gowing:

Of necessity, most London women had active social and work lives around the city. Servants and wives frequently ate outside the house, and did business and drank in alehouses. The daughters, wives and servants of craft households spent much of their days running errands and selling goods in open markets.⁹

In an address in *The Schoole of Abuse* to the gentlewomen of London, Gosson suggests that to show themselves in the theatre is to invite public scrutiny and lustful attentions from men:

...Thought is free: and you can forbidd no man, that vieweth you, to noute you, and that nouteth you, to iudge you, for entring to places of suspicion. (Sig. F2^f)

Gosson might be describing what happens to Win and Dame Overdo at the fair, when he cites Ovid's account of Roman theatre. It is a 'horsfaire for hores' (Sig. B3^v), a place where a man might take 'where he liked, a snatch for his share' (Sig. B4^f), as if anticipating the activities of Jorden Knockem, the horse-corser, in recruiting prostitutes for Ursula. Ursula 'the sow of enormity' recalls Gosson's description of his own play, *Catilins conspiracies*, as a 'Pig of mine owne Sowe' (Sig. C7^f). Audience behaviour is itself a performance, 'a right Comedie':

Such ticking, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such manning them home, when the sportes are ended, that it is a right Comedie, to marke their behaviour, to watch their conceites, as the Catte for the Mouse, and as good as a course at the game it selfe, to dogge them a little, or followe aloofe by the Print of their feete, and so discover by slotte where the deare taketh foyle. (Sig. C^v)

What starts inside the theatre goes on outside it, at least in Gosson's imagination:

...euery wanton and his Paramour, euerye man and his Mistresse, every John and his Joan, every knave and his queane, are there first acquainted & cheapen the Merchandise in that place, which they pay for else-where as they can agree. (Sig. C2^f)

His description of men at the theatre '...shouldering to sytte by women' (Sig. C^v) seems to apply to all women but he also mentions 'they that lack Customers al the weeke....to celebrate the Sabbath, flock to theaters, and there keepe a General Market of Bawdrie' (C2^f), with the implication that all women who attend the theatre will behave like prostitutes. A similar version of audience behaviour can be found in the writing of Phillip Stubbes, in *The Anatomie of Abuses*: 'such kissing and bussing: such clipping and culling: Suche winckinge and glancinge of wanton eyes, and the like is used, as is wonderfull to behold' (Lviii^f-Lviii^v). Like Gosson, Stubbes presents a vision of what takes place once the theatrical performance is concluded: 'Than these godly pageants being done, every mate sorts to his mate, every one bringes another homeward of their way verye friendly, and in their secret conclaves (couertly) they play ye Sodomits, or worse' (Sig. Lviii^v). Where Gosson imagines men and women, Stubbes may also imagine encounters between two men, although

⁹ See Laura Gowing, "The freedom of the streets", *Londinopolis*, 130-151, at 130 and 138.

'sodomite' had an extensive and ambiguous meaning in the early seventeenth century, covering various forms of unsanctioned sexual relations. For example, Stubbes speaks of a male adulterer and his woman lover, 'playing the vile *Sodomits* together' (Sig. Hvi^v).¹⁰

Stubbes, also, seems to look forward to *Bartholomew Fair* when he considers 'the good Examples to be learned in [theatres]':

...If you will learn to become a bawde, uncleane, and to deuerginat [sic] Mayds, to deflour [sic] honest Wyves: if you will learne to murther, slate, kill, picke, steal, robbe and roue...If you will learn to play the whore-maister, the glutton, Drunkard...you need to goe to no other schoole, for all these good Examples, may you see painted before your eyes in enterludes and playes...(Sig. Lviii^v-M^r)

Bartholomew Fair is crammed with self-referential comments to its status as theatre. The Induction starts with the information that the play cannot start because the writer of another performance, a puppet show, is a character in this one, acted by an actor in a costume which is damaged: 'He that should begin the play, Master Littlewit, the proctor, has a stich new fallen in his black silk stocking; 'twill be drawn up ere you can tell twenty' (2-4). He calls Littlewit by his name in 'the play', while simultaneously drawing attention to the actor's status by describing his costume and his 'very pretty part' (5-6). The Induction ends with Articles of Agreement between the author and the audience. These were written by the author who is no longer present and read out by the Scrivener and the audience is treated as if it has agreed to them already: 'In witness whereof, you have preposterously put to your seals already (which is your money) you will now add the other part of suffrage, your hands' (135-138). The Agreement is really a set of Instructions about proper audience behaviour, based on what the author perceives as failures by audiences in the past to control themselves.

By the end of the play, the persons of *Bartholomew Fair* have become the audience at the puppet-theatre, to see a play written by Littlewit, and have acted in various performances. Justice Overdo invites them home; Bartholomew Cokes says: 'Yes, and bring the actors along, we'll 'ha' the rest of the play at home' (5.6.109-110). By 'the play' and 'the actors', Cokes may mean the puppet play, but *Bartholomew Fair*, and those who act in it, must apparently continue after *Bartholomew Fair* is ended. It is impossible to know what will take place when the characters reach Justice Overdo's house. Possibly the sexual arrangements started at the fair will be continued outside it, just as Gosson and Stubbes imagined.

In addition, the fact that the fair itself is depicted as a kind of theatre ends up by infusing the concept of theatre with the excess and inflation of the fair. The fair caters for excessive tastes and for excessive longings for food, drink, tobacco, goods and sexual desires. Cokes longs for everything in the fair. When he waits to deceive the cut-purses, he cries: 'That a man should have such a desire to a thing, and want it' and Quarlous says to Winwife: 'Fore God, I'd give half the Fair, and 'twere mine, for a cutpurse for him, to save his longing' (3.5.130-133). Early in the play, when Cokes demands to see the licence, Wasp first refuses and then allows him to see it because:

¹⁰ See Orgel, *Impersonations*, 29-30; Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries*, 105-126, at 121. Both Orgel and Goldberg discuss the concept of 'or worse' in relation to sodomy.

‘A man must give way to him a little in trifles, gentlemen. These are errors, diseases of youth...’ (1.5.38-39), as if he must be humoured like a pregnant woman whose longings must be humoured. Despite the noise and violence of the puppet play it is also tedious, but Cokes, who represents the undifferentiated desire to consume anything and everything, wishes it to continue. Despite its excess, the fair is a place where people are reminded of what they lack.

The fair is also a place of madness. There are several madmen, including the truly mad Trouble-All, a range of roarers, some who roar as a distraction for cutpurses, Mooncalf, a near-idiot and Cokes, another idiot. But madness is assumed by other characters. Justice Overdo hopes to ‘get off with the reputation of what I would be: a certain middling thing between a fool and a madman’ (2.3.133-135). Quarlous acts a madman to marry Dame Purecraft. Both act out madness but also can be said to act madly in pretending to be mad. Win’s acted pregnant longing leads to her visits to Ursula’s booth and to the madness of agreeing to become a prostitute. The madness of the fair similarly infects, by association, the concept of theatre.

The fair, through the representation of Ursula, becomes a sign of the disorder of women and, again by association, of the disorder of theatre. Like Ursula’s body, the maternal body out of control, the fair sometimes stretches outside itself but can be reduced. The fair, and thus theatre, constantly changes shape and is impossible to fix. It is an amorphous place where meanings are unfixed and confused. In my view, what is stressed throughout *Bartholomew Fair* is the uncertainty of both pregnancy and theatre. Littlewit has dual roles as author of his puppet play and ‘father’ of Win’s child but no control over the outcome of performances, as discussed below. The acting of Win’s ‘pregnancy’ is one more demonstration that it is impossible to determine the meaning of a performance either in the theatre or in real life.

‘Is she your quagmire, Dan Knockem? Is she your bog?’

Bartholomew Fair is focused on the fair, rather than any individual character, but the fair is centred around the booth of Ursula and around Ursula herself. Zeal-of-the-Land Busy says that Ursula is ‘above all to be avoided, having the marks upon her of the three enemies of man the world, as being in the Fair; the devil, as being in the fire; and the flesh, as being herself’ (3.6.31-35). In describing one fat woman as the world, the flesh, and the devil, Busy makes Ursula’s significance all-encompassing but also reduces her to no more than evil flesh so that her distinctive body is indistinguishable from the pig she roasts and sells. By making her the devil, all evil is located in one woman. Paster calls Ursula’s booth ‘the play’s central locus’ (36) and describes Ursula and her booth as ‘mutually identifying’ (37). Ursula’s booth serves as a site for consumption, through eating and drinking, and evacuation, through urination, defecation and vomiting, and as a place for illicit sexual intercourse. It is thus like the birth canal in its closeness to the urethra and the anus, a reminder of Ambroise Paré’s words quoted in Chapter One, about ‘the place appointed for human conception, the loathsomeness of the filth...humected and moistened, and the vicinity and neerenesse of the great gut...and of the bladder’.¹¹

¹¹ *Of the Generation of Man*, 887. Nicholas Culpeper, in his *Directory for Midwives*, appears to state that the neck of the womb is placed to enable the maximum degree of dilation in childbirth, but then comments that ‘the neck of the Womb is seated between the passage of Urine and the right Gut, to shew fond man what little reason he hath to be proud and domineer, being conceived between the

Justice Overdo finds 'enormity' in Joan Trash's gingerbread-babies: 'Aye! Have I met with enormity so soon?' (2.2.10). Knockem is: 'Another special enormity. A cutpurse of the sword, the boot, and the feather!' (2.3.11-12). Overdo is also concerned that 'the secretary', 'so civil a young man should haunt this debauched company' (2.3.30-31). But he calls Ursula's booth 'the very womb and bed of enormity, gross, as herself!' (Paster, 37; 2.2.101-102). Ursula's booth is a place where 'you can have your punk and your pig in state...' (2.5.36-38). The booth is thus associated with corruption and with Ursula's body, so that corruption and her body become indistinguishable. Corruption of all kinds is thus equated with female sexuality. Many disreputable men are at the fair to corrupt innocents, and various forms of corruption are practiced, by Edgworth and Nightingale, for example. Ursula's booth is used for more than prostitution: Edgworth and Nightingale use it to store purses they have cut (2.4.35-36; 2.6.58-60). The patrons she expects for the prostitutes are men: 'Zekiel Edgworth, and three or four gallants' (4.5.14). She uses men, Knockem and Whit, to recruit Win, when she finds herself: 'undone for want of fowl i' the Fair, here' (4.5.13), while 'I work the velvet woman within....' (4.5.16-17). But all corruption is equated with female sexuality mediated through Ursula's booth, standing for her body.

Ursula's body is an amorphous bulk, apparently devoid of womanly attractions, although she claims at one stage to be: 'a plain plump soft wench o' the suburbs...juicy and wholesome' (2.5.75-76). Paster comments that when Ursula talks of standing over the hot fire and melting 'away to the first woman, a rib, again' (2.2.49-50), she describes herself as 'an archetypal representation of woman...a vessel leaking and melting, to be known by her loss of corporeal being—loss of content, form, and integral identity...' (37). Reduced in her imagination to one rib, Ursula stands for Eve, the temptress and the cause of human woes, especially the burdens and pain of human procreation. In addition to shrinking, Ursula's body swells so that it is also the fair. Quarlous asks Knockem: 'Is she your quagmire, Dan Knockem? Is she your bog?...' (2.5.81-82).¹² In 1614, 'the muddy swamp of the fairgrounds was paved at City expense and made a "clean and spacious walk"'; this reform came from the king whose letter ordering it was only obeyed 'after considerable protest' (Marcus, 'Pastimes', 201). Ursula's body is equated with filth, something to be cleaned up.

Filth is more directly associated with female sexuality when Quarlous and Winwife jest further about Ursula's fatness, displaying a fear of her as a sexual being that is voracious and devouring, likely to consume them:

Quarlous: Yes, he that would venture for't, I assure him, might sink
into her and be drowned a week ere any friend he had could find
where he were,

Winwife: And then he would be a fortnight weighing up again.

Quarlous: 'Twere like falling into a whole shire of butter. (2.5.85-89)

Here, rather than a loss of female identity, it is the men who express concern at loss of identity through drowning or being smothered in the female body. Ursula also

places ordained to cast out Excrements, the very sinks of the Body, and in such a manner that his Mother was ashamed to tell him how' (30).

¹² 'Horse dealers were said to disguise the weak legs of horses by standing them in deep wet clay'; see note to 2.5.81-82, at 508.

describes herself as 'all fire and fat' (2.2.49), qualities associated with pregnancy: the fatness of a distended belly, the moisture of the woman who desires sexual intercourse and the fire of the intercourse that has led to conception. Quarlous and Knockem speak of her as 'Body o' the Fair!...Mother o' the bawds'; 'mother o' the pigs, sir, mother o' the pigs'; 'Mother o' the Furies' (2.5.67-69). Knockem calls her: 'the good race-bawd o' Smithfield' (2.5.155-156), by analogy to 'race-mare, a breeding mare'.¹³ Ursula is thus equated not only with the fair but with motherhood and breeding, in its least satisfactory aspects. One of the things she breeds is whores.¹⁴

Like Ursula's body, language also shifts amorphously. 'Vapours' is a word used constantly by Knockem, for whom it can have virtually any meaning, for example: 'Let's drink it out good Urs, and no vapours!' (2.3.20); 'good vapours' (2.3.54); 'strange vapours...idle vapours...' (2.5.128); 'noble vapours' (2.4.49); 'a kind vapour' (2.4.64); 'a courteous vapour' (2.4.66). Overdo describes him as 'this goodly person before us here, this vapours' (2.3.23). 'Vapours' is associated with Galenic 'humours', so that Knockem's humour, for example, is choleric; and his use of the word may be his description of the humour of the person to whom he speaks.¹⁵ Knockem finds more occasions to use 'vapours' throughout the rest of the play. He uses it in the context of 'smoke and froth' (tobacco and beer), and Ursula's bower, apparently as a word for a 'jest': 'A good vapour' (2.5.36). The 'jest' made by Quarlous links smoke and froth with a light invitation (2.5.35), suggesting a slightly different meaning of 'vapours', something unsubstantial or worthless, like the articles sold by Joan Trash and Lantern Leatherhead, the light women of the fair and the quips and quibbles of Littlewit.¹⁶

As a woman, Ursula's humour is moist. In her context, 'vapours' can thus mean her moist, boggy body and, because she is the fair, the mist arising from the marshy ground at the fair before it was drained, as in '...Bog? Quagmire? Foul vapours!' (2.5.84). It also implies the 'steam' by which Busy sniffs out the roasting pig (3.2.75). But 'vapours' also means: 'A morbid condition supposed to be caused by the presence of...exhalations [developed within the organs of the body, especially the stomach]; depression of spirits, hypochondria, hysteria or other nervous disorder, as in "the vapours"'.¹⁷ Mooncalf asks Knockem to 'respect my mistress' bower; as you call it, for the honour of our booth, none o' your vapours here' (2.5.52-54). Knockem questions Ursula: 'Motion breed vapours?' (2.3.39), as if in reference to her emotions. 'Motion' might also mean the kind of movements expected in Ursula's booth, the 'jig-a-jog' referred to by the Stage-keeper. 'Vapours' is thus

¹³ See note to 2.5.156, at 508.

¹⁴ See Marcus, 'Pastimes', 204.

¹⁵ See Michael Jamieson (ed. and intro.), *Ben Jonson: Three Comedies* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1966) who argues that:

...this term is used habitually and often tiresomely by Knockem—indeed Eugene Waith in his Yale edition of the comedy calls his use of the word 'a kind of verbal tic'. 'Vapours' means deliberate quarrelsomeness—as in the formal game of vapours played in Act Four—but in the play it is often synonymous with Jonsonian 'humours', so that the more eccentric, one-idea characters can be said to have their own 'vapours', note to II.iii.23, at 483-484.

¹⁶ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol II, 2542, 'Vapour', Sense 2 c.

¹⁷ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol II, 2542, 'Vapour', Sense 3 b.

associated with sexual activity, the 'longings' of pregnancy, other forms of madness and through Leatherhead, the 'motion-man', with theatrical representation.

In Act 4, scene 4, 'vapours' means '*nonsense; every man to oppose the last man that spoke, whether it concerned him or no*'.¹⁸ The game is put on 'for a lift', that is to distract Wasp so the licence can be stolen or 'lifted'.¹⁹ In this context, 'vapours' suggests that 'foggy' meaning is not important in the theatre. A performance such as this one is successful, even if what is said is utter nonsense, because it is not intended to convey meaning but, instead, to confuse and distract.

'This cap does convince!'

Win is part of a show of pregnant desire put on to deceive her mother and Busy. When she first appears on stage, she is dressed in fashionable and expensive clothes, quite different from those she would have worn as a girl at home with her Puritan mother. Clothes are a feature of activities at the fair, possibly responsible for the conversion of women into prostitutes but also through transactions with the Clothier [Northern]. I mentioned in the Introduction that Stubbes was obsessed with the falsehood of fine clothes and the dangers for those who wore them, unless, of course, they were of high rank. He was fascinated by the cost and diversity of headgear: 'other capital ornaments, as french hood, hat, cappe, kercher, and suche like', in velvets and taffetas, and of varied colours (Sig. Fiii^f). For a man who disapproved of rich and costly apparel, he gave surprisingly detailed accounts of women's gowns:

...some are of silk, some of veluet, some of grogram, some of taffatie...some of fine cloth, of ten, twentie or fortie shillings a yard. But if the whole gowne be not silke or veluet, then the same shall be layed with lace....Or if not so, (as lace is not fine enough sometimes) then it must be garded with great gardes of veluet, four or five fingers broad at the least, and edged with costly lace....Some have sleeves much shorter, cut by the arme and pointed with silk ribbons....(Sig. Fvi^f)

He goes on to detail women's capes, petticoats and kirtles, also of silk, velvet and other luxury materials (Sig. Fvi^f-Sig. Fvi^v). The result is that:

...women seeme to be the smallest part of themselves, not naturall women, but artificiall Women, not Women of flesh, & blod, but rather puppits, or mawmets of rags & clowtes compact together. (Sig. Fvi^v)

He is concerned that the 'canker of pride' involved in wearing fine clothes infects even the lowest levels of society and it is thus impossible to distinguish 'who is a noble woman, who is an honourable, or worshipfull Woman, from them of the meaner sorte' (Fvii^f). There is an uneasy movement around the idea of clothes as signs of identity, which can be wrongly appropriated and mask or veil the wearer, thus inhibiting proper interpretations; clothes that transform the wearers; and clothes which obliterate the wearers altogether, so that without their clothes they are nothing.

Stubbes would have been fascinated by the clothes in *Bartholomew Fair*. While abhorring the performance, he would have approved of Busy's words to Knockem: 'long hair, it is an ensign of pride' (3.6.27). The effect of clothes in the play is

¹⁸ See stage direction preceding 4.4.25.

¹⁹ See note to 4.4.1, 511.

similar to what he describes. Win and Dame Overdo both wear fashionable clothes from the outset. Win wears a velvet cap (1.1.18-19), Dame Overdo a French-hood of velvet. The costly velvets worn by Win and Dame Overdo signal to Ursula that Win and Dame Overdo are 'whores, strumpets, and bawdes', 'prone to all kinds of naughtynesse'. But the clothes most directly associated with prostitution are green because transactions were fulfilled on the grass. Busy warns Dame Purecraft to avoid: 'Goldilocks, the purple strumpet....In her yellow gown and green sleeves' (3.6.84-86). Ursula arranges 'Green gowns, crimson petticoats' so that Win and Dame Overdo can become 'green women' (4.5.85-86).

Not all prostitutes dress in luxurious clothing. Punk Alice, 'a mistress of the game', a prostitute, makes a distinction between luxurious whores and others. She pulls Dame Overdo's hood over her ears, complaining that: 'The poor common whores can ha' no traffic for the privy rich ones; your caps and hoods of velvet call away our customers, and lick the fat from us' (4.5.63-65); and she says '...[they] take our trade from us with...[their] tuftaffeta haunches' (4.5.60-61). Punk Alice is, like the descriptions of Moll Cutpurse in *The Roaring Girl* by Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker, a woman wearing mannish clothing but not as a disguise. Moll changes into trousers but first appears wearing 'a black safeguard', a skirt. Even when she is wearing trousers, Moll is not pretending to be a man. Nor does Punk Alice pretend to be a man. Knockem says to her: 'Shall I tear ruff, slit waistcoat, make rags of petticoat?' (4.5.76-77). Her complaint about Win and Dame Overdo is that their rich attire overshadows her own and thus detracts from her own business. Her words suggest that the clients can tell the difference between a man and a woman but will prefer a velvet woman if one is available.

Littlewit says of his wife when she first appears, in a velvet cap, corrupt both for its material and its fashionable style, with 'fine high shoes', probably 'corked', another fashion of which Stubbes disapproved (Sig. Fviii^v):

Now you look finely indeed, Win! This cap does convince! You'd not ha' worn it...nor ha' had it of velvet....let me kiss it! And her fine high shoes, like the Spanish lady! (1.1.17-21)

As the play starts, Win is presented as a spectacle that will encourage sexual desire. Littlewit tells his wife he wants to look at her: 'I would fain see thee pace' (1.1.22). In putting his wife through her paces, he foreshadows the fair where Win will be directly equated by Jordan Knockem, the horse-corser, with a horse. He also wants to kiss her, although it is difficult to separate Win from her clothes, in his descriptions: 'By this fine cap, I could never leave kissing on't' (1.1.22-23). Win thus shifts from being something to be observed to being an object to be enjoyed sexually. Littlewit, discovered kissing his wife in a place where his friends can observe them, asks Winwife what he thinks of her clothes:

Troth, I am a little taken with my Win's dressing here! Dos't not fine, Master Winwife? How do you apprehend, sir? She would not ha' worn this habitDear Win, let Master Winwife kiss you (1.2.3-8).

Winwife kisses her and Littlewit says: 'I envy no man my delicates' (1.2.12), again as if she and her delicate clothes are the same. When Quarlous appears, Littlewit asks if he recalls what they 'discoursed on last night....No? Not concerning Win? Look you, there she is, and dressed as I told you she should be' (1.3.15-20). Quarlous cannot remember, because he was drunk, but kisses Win and, when she protests, Littlewit chides her: 'O Win, fie, what do you mean, Win? Be womanly, Win? Make an outcry to your mother, Win?' (1.3.35-36). It is not an immense step from being a wife

paraded before her husband's friends in fashionable clothes, so they can admire and kiss her, to being a prostitute in a coach parading before gallants and other prospective clients.

Conflating women and their clothes is reminiscent of Stubbes. They are not: 'Women of flesh, & blod, but rather puppits, or mawmets of rags and clowtes compact together' (Sig. Fvi^v). Littlewit is not the only character who speaks of women as if they were the same as their clothes. Winwife speaks of Win's 'soft velvet head, like a melocoton' (1.2.14-15). Dame Overdo is 'Mistress French-hood' (1.5.13); 'woman o' shilk' (4.4.170); 'velvet voman' (4.4.174); 'guest o' velvet' (4.4.186); 'the velvet woman' (4.5.16). Edgewood says to Quarlous:

Sir, will it please you enter in here at Ursula's and take part of a silver gown, a velvet petticoat, or a wrought smock? I am promised such, and I can spare any gentleman a moiety. (4.6.17-19)

Ursula has recruited Win and Dame Overdo for Quarlous's pleasure and his words suggest that it is the clothes that make the women available and desirable. He also has an interest in second-hand clothes, and may plan to sell those taken from the women when they put on their green gowns, but he would not destroy their value by cutting them in half.

'This cap does convince!', suggests that, to Littlewit, the cap completes Win's outfit, adding something that she otherwise would not have, as if to say 'this cap caps off your outfit'. 'Cap' can also be used to mean: 'To overtop, outdo, beat'.²⁰ 'Convince', means 'persuade' but once also meant 'overcome', 'overwhelm' or 'vanquish'.²¹ Littlewit is overwhelmed by the cap, wanting to kiss Win, or the cap, or Win while wearing the cap. While Littlewit is delighted with the effect of Win's clothes, what he expects them to convey is less clear. There is a suggestion that he uses Win, as well as Dame Purecraft's money, as a bait to trap a new husband for the widow. He has been discussing Win with the drunken Quarlous, so 'convince' might also refer to whatever it is that he said, possibly that Win is sexually attractive and, perhaps, available, as her clothes demonstrate. He is deeply concerned with his reputation as a wit and a writer of the puppet-play and seeks to outdo the poets and literary men from the Three Cranes, Mitre, and Mermaid Taverns who he calls 'pretenders' (1.1.29-30). Win's finery is, for her husband, a sign of his importance in the sphere he regards as worthwhile: 'Slid, other men have wives as fine as the players, and as well dressed' (1.1.36-37). Just as Win might like to match Dame Overdo's hood and chain, she might be a means for her husband to outdo the other literary figures he envies. He might demonstrate that he can dress his wife like the wife of a player. But he may mean he has dressed his wife like a player, wearing the clothes a player would wear to convince the audience of whatever it is he means to convey.

Win is 'convinced' by her clothes, in the sense that, wearing them, she is 'overcome' and has no meaning independently of them. But if she has no control over the

²⁰ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol I, 279. 'Cap', Sense 4.

²¹ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol I, 419.. 'Convince' means: 'Sense 1. 'To overcome, vanquish'. Sense 3. 'To bring to acknowledge the truth of; to satisfy by argument or evidence'. Jamieson gives 'overcome', 'impress' as meanings for 'convince', I.i.19, fn.. G. A. Wilkes (ed. and intro), *Ben Jonson: Five Plays* (Oxford and New York: 1981; first issued as a World Classics paperback, 1988), 483-604, gives 'overpower' (I.i.18, fn.).

message she conveys while wearing them, neither does Littlewit. Ursula and her cronies regard Win's clothes as demonstrating a propensity to prostitution. Where Winwife and Nightingale fear a loss of identity through sexual contact with Ursula, Win might be said to be truly 'overwhelmed' by Ursula, in the sense that her identity as a wife is drowned in Ursula's booth and Ursula's green gown. Punk Alice also expects to be 'convinced' by the clothes worn by Win and Dame Overdo, expecting that her trade will be overwhelmed.

Haslem disputes 'the assumption that the women prostitute themselves to gain the velvet attire that Whit and Knockem promise them', because such an assumption 'overlooks the subtext in which the women are driven by suspect gender-driven appetites rather than class attitudes' (450). But her argument disregards the intensely metatheatrical aspects of *Bartholomew Fair*, and the implied references to the antitheatricalists and their obsession with clothes.²² There are a number of conflicting interpretations. Win may have been transformed into a strumpet or whore, as Stubbes suggests, by wearing stylish clothing, in stages, first by the velvet cap and fine high shoes, and then by the green gown. But it is also argued that, by adopting the green gown she will take on the privileges, if not the status, of a lady. Whit tells her that, as a wife, she is a bondwoman but as a 'free-woman...dou shalt live like a lady' (4.5.30-31); and he and Knockem tell her she would have 'her wires and her tires, her green gowns and her velvet petticoats'; she would 'ride to Ware and Romford i' dy coash, shee de players, be in love vit 'em; sup vit gallantsh, be drunk, and cost de noting' (4.5.32-36). She seems to agree with Edgworth that she has a 'finer life...than to be clogged with a husband': 'Yes, a great deal' but she is more interested in when the play will begin (5.4.53-56). When told it is held up while the author looks for his wife, she says: 'That's I, that's I'; Edgworth replies: 'That was you lady; but now you are no such poor thing' (5.4.60-63). Win speaks as if she still sees herself as married to Littlewit and does not understand the situation: 'They do so all-to-be-madam me, I think they think me a very lady' (5.4.38-39). Possibly, she has not yet been transformed from being a wife. Littlewit, when Win is unmasked, says: 'O my wife, my wife, my wife' (5.6.45) as if he, also, thinks that she will continue in that role.

Win may only be 'convinced' by the clothes, 'overwhelmed' but able to be a wife again once she takes them off, or after some time. Winwife and Nightingale assume that, eventually, a man would be retrieved from Ursula's bog ('a week ere any friend he had could find where he were....a fortnight weighing up again' [being dragged up]) (2.5.85-88). As Quarlous is 'mad but from the gown outward' (5.6.61-62), Win may be a whore only from the outside. With a different outside she would cease to be one. But as she has first worn her fashionable clothes to please Littlewit, it may be that she cannot lose the taint of whoredom. Fashion itself is corrupt, because it blurs distinctions between the high and the low. When Win and Dame Overdo first come to the puppet play, Overdo does not recognise them. He wonders why 'persons of such fashion' are in such a place (5.4.34-35). As Stubbes warns, he is unable to distinguish 'the noble woman...the honourable, or worshipfull Woman, from them of the meaner sorte'. *Bartholomew Fair* leaves it open whether there is a difference.

²² As discussed in Chapter One, the distinction between a prostitute and other unchaste women was difficult to ascertain, Faramerz Dabhoiwala, 'The pattern of sexual immorality', 86-106, at 88-92.

But Win and Dame Overdo are also masked. In *The Anatomie*, it is said of the argument that other nations surpass 'Aiglina' for '...exquisite bravery in Apparell' that: 'This is but a visour, or cloke, to hide their Sodometrie withall: onelye spoken, not proued: forged in the deceitfull Mint of their own braynes' (Sig. Bviii^f).

Later, it is said of women:

When they use to ride abrod, they have inuisories or visors made of veluet, wherwith they couer all their faces, hauing holes made in them against their eyes, whereout they look. So that if a man that knew not their guise before, should chaunce to meet one of them hee would think hee met a monster or a deuil, for face he can see none, but two brode holes against her eyes, with glasses in them. (Sig. Gii^f)

Throughout *Bartholomew Fair*, characters mask or cloak their intentions. Busy persuades himself that pig 'is a spice of idolatry' (1..6.49) but its 'foul face' may have a veil put over it, and be shadowed, as it were (1.6..61-63). He goes on to describe how pig 'may be eaten, and in the Fair, I take it, in a booth, the tents of the wicked....so it be eaten with a reformed mouth, with sobriety, and humbleness; not gorged in with gluttony and greediness....' (1.6. 63-67).

Dame Purecraft is a 'most elect hypocrite', an actor. When she is deciding whether she should reveal to Quarlous the truth about her life as a Puritan, she says: 'I must uncover myself unto him, or I shall never enjoy him' (5.2.44-45). Overdo speaks of a cloud or covert so that he can see the enormities of the fair without being seen (2.1.40-41). Busy's 'conversion' at the puppet play means he has dropped his veil and will now enjoy being a consumer of what the fair has to offer where previously he needed a mask to do so. Dame Purecraft makes it clear that her unmasking is to allow her to continue in her old ways.

Win and Dame Overdo arrive at the puppet play wearing masks, a sign to Stubbes that a man might think, if he did not know their faces already, that there was 'a monster or deuil' below. It is not clear how far the women have become monsters or devils. Win wants to know how her husband will know her unless she takes off her mask. As noted, Overdo, the seeker out of enormities, does not initially see any enormity in the visitors. They are 'so good company' (5.4.34). But he watches further and, when Whit tells him he can have either lady for tweluepence, he decides: 'This will prove my chieftest enormity' (5.4.51). He unmask himself and various other people but discovers that the chieftest enormity is not a monster or devil, but his wife.

'I have an affair i' the Fair, Win, a puppet-play of my own making—say nothing—that I writ for the motion man'

In this section, I look briefly at Littlewit as a failed authority figure and a low author. In *Bartholomew Fair*, authority figures who disapprove of the fair, like Justice Overdo, Wasp and Busy, are put in the stocks and effectively silenced. Stallybrass and White examine the way in which *Bartholomew Fair* depicts authority and authorship: the humiliation of 'religious censor, Busy, the educational censor, Wasp, and the state censor, Overdo, [who] are taken away to be put into the stocks...the disguised Justice is silenced and ends up by inviting the whole fair...to further feasting at his house' (65-66). Jonson's ideal of the author was a being 'separate from the festive scene' (77).

Littlewit lacks authority in his own household. By the standards of the conduct manuals, the Littlewit family is dysfunctional in that Win, when her husband tells her he wishes her to attend the fair, assumes that she can only go if she receives permission from her mother: 'but my mother will never consent to such a—"profane motion", she will call it' (1.5.131-132). Thus although Littlewit is the head of the household it is accepted that the widowed Dame Purecraft exerts the power, except that she requires Busy's approval. Where Littlewit does exert authority, it is inappropriate. He should, as a husband, ensure that his wife stays at home. And he should protect her from the advances of his friends. Instead he dresses her in clothes designed to attract men and then persuades her to attend the fair. Such an outing would be especially dangerous for a pregnant woman. Jacques Guillemeau, in *Child-birth* ordered pregnant women 'to shun all great noyse and sounds' (22). The fair is noisy, with ballads, roars, drums and rattles, for example; and eating pork is unsuitable for a pregnant woman, as discussed below. Win ends up driving around in a coach. Littlewit's carelessness about Win's well-being and reputation is confirmed when he leaves her at Ursula's booth, in the company of strange men, allowing her to fall into moral danger.

Littlewit also lacks authority as an author. He is proud of his conceits: 'I ha' such luck to spin out these fine things still, and like a silk-worm, out of myself' (1.1.1-3). What he perceives as his superabundant wit overwhelms him: 'I do feel conceits coming on me, more than I am able to turn tongue to' (1.1.28-29). *The Anatomie* discusses 'Pride of the mouth, or of wordes' as an introduction to 'Pride of apparell' (Sig. Bvi^v-Bviiⁱ). Littlewit's spinning out of words from himself is like the dilation identified by Patricia Parker in the rhetoric of Overdo, Busy and Wasp, but written small.²³ His first example of wit, that Bartholomew Cokes wants a licence for St Bartholomew's Day (1.1.3-7), is a good example of his standard. Like a silk thread, it is too 'delicate' to bear much scrutiny. His comparison of his conceits with the silk that the silk-worm spins from itself, identifies it clearly as rubbish, trash and filth.²⁴

Littlewit's main conceit is his puppet play: 'an affair i' the Fair, Win, a puppet-play of my own making—say nothing—that I writ for the motion man' (1.5.129-130). I have discussed in the Introduction the commonplace allusions at the time to the poet as 'parent' and the poem as a 'child' which the poet has conceived, borne and laboured to bring forth. Littlewit, seeking to persuade Dame Purecraft to allow Win to attend the fair, says: 'Do not cast away your own child, and perhaps one of mine....' (1.6.19-20). He may refer to a child of his that Win bears or his 'child' that will be performed at the puppet-theatre at the fair and that will be cast away if Win cannot attend to see it.

The performance of the puppet play is a disaster, changed by the intervention of Busy into something Littlewit did not intend. It provides a demonstration, in practical terms, of why a playwright would wish to have plays published as 'Workes', as opposed to records of what was performed in the theatre. Divorced from theatre, the plays take on the quality of high culture and, equally as important, the playwright is also able to supervise the text. Littlewit is excited about the fact that his piece is to be acted, suggesting that, for him, dramatic works gain their full authority only when

²³ *Literary Fat Ladies*, 24

²⁴ In 1619, in *A Sermon of Apparell*, John Williams was to argue that silk was made from excrement. See Chapter 4, on *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*.

presented on stage. But he is also happy to wait until he sees how it is received before he identifies himself as author (5.3.18-22). We cannot tell how much of what is said by the puppets or by Leatherhead is Littlewit's work. He is not there to supervise, having gone off to look for his wife, and the audience fails to respect the basic items set out in the Articles of Agreement in the Induction: '...to remain in their places...with patience'; that every audience member can 'censure' for himself and for his party, 'so that he will undertake that they shall be silent' (69-70 and 82-83).

Littlewit's piece itself is nonsense, a 'vapour', like the game in Act 4, scene 4. The protagonists contradict each other and it is impossible to distinguish the players, audience and theatre management. In the opening part, Leatherhead speaks a prologue and in the exchanges that follow, his role is partly that of a commentator but sometimes he speaks to the puppets. When Cokes asks for an interpretation, he is sometimes answered by Leatherhead, who, as himself, explains what is going on. On other occasions, Cokes is ignored.

In Act 5, scene 5, when Busy intervenes, he speaks directly to the puppets, who answer him, and the piece degenerates further, if possible, into a slanging match, in which Busy and Puppet Dionysius make assertions and contradict each other:

Busy: ...his profession...is profane, idol.

Puppet Dionysius: *It is not profane!*

Leatherhead: It is not profane, he says.

Busy: It is profane.

Puppet Dionysius: *It is not profane....*

Busy: And I say it is profane, as being the page of Pride, and the waiting woman of Vanity. (5.5.59-72)

Except for its comparative brevity, their exchange is also reminiscent of the responses by supporters of the theatre which simply deny what the antitheatricalists allege. The references to pride and vanity linked to excessive clothing are also especially reminiscent of Stubbes. The hypocrisy of those who oppose theatre is stressed when Puppet Dionysius points out that the Puritans of Blackfriars dominate the trade in fashionable clothes:

Or feather-makers i' the Friars, that are o' your persuasion. Are they not with their perukes and their puffs, their fans and their huffs, as much pages of Pride and waiters upon Vanity.²⁵

Puppet Cole's words '*Harm watch, harm catch*' (5.4.168) are another direct allusion to the criticisms of the antitheatricalists, this time to the pernicious effects of watching vice which is counterfeited by the players on the stage:

As long as we know ourselves to be flesh, beholding those examples in Theaters...we are taught by other mens examples how to fall. And they that came honest to a play, may depart infected. (Gosson, *Playes Confuted*, Sig. G4^r)

Littlewit's 'child', the puppet play, can be compared with the 'ginger-bread progeny' of Joan Trash, said to be made out of 'stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger and dead honey' (2.2.3-9). As such it is dead rubbish, made up of tainted goods. Littlewit's play is made up of two tales that might be called stale, in that they had already been told, *Hero and Leander* by Christopher Marlowe and *Damon and Pythias* by Richard

²⁵ See note to 5.5.75-76 at 514.

Edwards.²⁶ Levine considers, and rejects, the suggestion that the choice of Hero and Leander is intended to link Marlowe, the atheist homosexual and ‘member of the school of night’ with a prodigal, unorthodox and homosexual stage, in the way that an antitheatricalist might have done (90). If Jonson had wished to do so, Levine argues, one of Marlowe’s plays, like *Tamburlaine* or *The Jew of Malta* would have been more appropriate (90). She also questions the alternative view, that Jonson regarded the modern stage as slaughtering ‘pure poetry’. In Littlewit’s puppet play, ‘anything potentially objectionable to an anti-theatricalist’ in Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander* has been excised, notably the ‘overwhelming homosexual embrace’ of Leander by Neptune but also all references to Leander’s ambiguous sexuality, his ‘golden tresses that were never shorn, his transvestite-like appearance...’ (91). There is no need, Levine argues, for Busy to be ‘converted’ to *Hero and Leander* because it has already been ‘converted’ (98). ‘Both the puppet and the poem have been gelded’, she argues, Jonson’s ‘vision of a world that has met the demands of the anti-theatricalist’ (100).

If Littlewit’s play is his child, there are also implications that it is acted by children. I discussed in the previous chapter, on *The Duchess of Malfi*, the effect of the reference to the ‘young springall’ in linking the body of the Duchess with her inner chamber and her womb, thus effectively presenting her body as a moving theatre.

Bartholomew Fair also contains some suggestions that a woman’s body might be no more than a portable theatre, through references to babies and the puppet theatre. Joan Trash carries her babies in a basket, as the puppets are carried in a basket. The puppet theatre is portable, carried onto the stage. Leatherhead calls his puppets ‘the small players’; as Cokes says: ‘These be players minor indeed’ (5.3.65-67). Unlike the foetus in *The Duchess of Malfi*, these puppets have no independent action, Leatherhead supplying all the motion and speaking for all of them—at least until Busy intervenes, when the implication is that Puppet Dionysius begins to speak for himself.

The connections between the puppet play and the attacks of the antitheatricalists will be discussed further when I discuss boy actors in *Bartholomew Fair*, at the end of this chapter.

‘I ha’ somewhat of the mother in me, you shall see’

Littlewit is also the author of another ‘device, a dainty one....I have it i’ faith, and ‘tis a fine one. Win, long to eat of a pig, sweet Win, i’ the Fair; do you see? I’ the heart o’the Fair....’ (1.5.133-136). Littlewit wants Win to attend the fair to see his play and knows she will need her mother’s permission, which will be refused if she explains her real motive. He thus suggests to Win that she should demonstrate that she has a passionate longing to eat roast pork which he presents to Dame Purecraft as the pregnant woman’s longing for unusual food, ‘the Pica’. As discussed in Chapter Five, ‘the Pica’ affects pregnant women, who crave what Paré called ‘illaudable meates’ (890). Failure to give in to the pregnant woman’s craving might injure any child she bore, although giving in can also be dangerous, as with the Duchess of Malfi. If pregnant women ‘cannot forbear, suffer them a little, and let them haue their longings, for feare it should proue worse with them’ (Guillemeau, 21). Littlewit says to Win that her mother ‘will do anything, Win, to satisfy your longing’ (1.5.137-

²⁶ See note to 5.3.7-9 at 513.

138). Dame Purecraft starts by rejecting completely any suggestion that her daughter eat pork, and is first swayed when Littlewit says 'do not you cast away your own child, and perhaps one of mine' (1.6.19-20). She uses the same argument to persuade Busy: 'Truly, I do love my child dearly, and I would not have her miscarry, or hazard her first fruits, if it might be otherwise' (1.6.58-59).²⁷

Win jokes to her husband: 'I ha' somewhat o' the mother in me, you shall see' (1.5.147-148) and then it appears that 'the mother' has taken over, overwhelming her, as she gives a convincing performance of a woman who will be suffocated unless she is allowed to eat roast pork: 'Fetch her, fetch her, ah, ah' (1.5.148-149). Like the Duchess's craving for apricots, roast pork is not as unusual as some other peculiar foods that pregnant women crave, like coals or old shoes; but it is linked to sexuality. Dame Purecraft's warnings to Win of the 'fleshly motion' of pig, its 'foul temptations in these assaults, whereby it broacheth flesh and blood', its 'carnal provocations' (1.6.14-17), identify Win's longing for pig as a longing for sexual intercourse: Win's body will be 'broached'. Pig is also equated with female sexuality, through Ursula, the 'perpetually open orifice'.

Dame Purecraft also equates pig with the devil and pollution: 'What polluted one was it that named first the unclean beast, pig, to you, child? (1.6.6-8). Reminiscent of the Gadarene swine and their violent rush into the sea when possessed by devils (Matthew VIII.28-34), Win claims she was first persuaded by a 'profane black thing with a beard' (1.6.12). As discussed in Chapter Three, the work of Edward Jorden, *A Brief Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother*, attributed 'the mother' to natural causes but the commonly held belief was still that it was caused by diabolical possession.²⁸

Knockem feared being bogged in Ursula's quagmire but the implication, when Win assumes the signs of 'the mother', is that, rather than it being a man who will be drowned or engulfed by something outside him, Win will be engulfed by something that arises within her and overwhelms her. In seeking to 'convince' her mother that she should go to the fair, she acts as if she is 'convinced' by her own body. Guillemeau discusses the causes of 'the Pica', which was attributed, by those of 'the soundest opinion', to 'diuers excrements and ill humours' infecting the stomach (36) and he also notes the aches and pains experienced by pregnant women from a 'great store of grosse winds bred, not onely in the stomacke, and guts, but also about the Liuer, Spleene...' (47). Win's attack of 'the mother' is like an attack of 'the

²⁷ A pregnant woman must judge the amount of meat she eats; 'too much abstinence makes the child weak and sickly...As also the too great quantity of meate his Mother takes, may often stifle him, or else make him grow so big, that he cannot keepe himselfe in his place, which constraines him either to come forth, or else makes him sickly' (Guillemeau, 19). All baked meat is prohibited for pregnant women (20); roast pork at Ursula's booth is greasy, thus prohibited also because it is too moist; it is hot and spicy, also grounds for denying it to a pregnant woman (20).

²⁸ Although Busy is a Puritan and thus likely to attribute Win's cravings to supernatural forces, he does not directly equate pig with demonic possession, when Dame Purecraft consults him, although his words reinforce the connection between pig, female sexuality and pollution. He himself wishes to eat pork and he thus finds a reason to do so, by equating 'longing' with a 'disease' of women, something carnal, thus natural and thus the subject of longing and thus able to be eaten (1.6.43-47). He argues, also, that eating pig at the Fair can be justified on religious grounds, to demonstrate that he can profess his hatred of Jews by eating swine's flesh in public (1.6.85-87). Once Busy has eaten, his fear of the Fair returns: Smithfield is 'the seat of the Beast' (3.6.41).

vapours', associated with the special gassy 'vapours' of pregnant women. Like the theatrical 'vapours' in Act 4, scene 4, it is intended to distract her mother from the true purpose of their visit to the fair.

Both Dame Purecraft, a woman who is not pregnant, and Busy, a man, conceal their own desires to attend the fair and eat roast pork, while achieving that result. Despite their hypocrisy, their longing for pork is more genuine than Win's, making the notion of 'pregnant longings' a complex one: what is specific to pregnancy spreads out to apply to all women and then also engulfs men. The implications of Win's assumed pregnant longing are even more complex and confused if Win is not herself pregnant. To Haslem, Win's pregnancy is as false as her longing for pork. She is responding to a reference by Paster to 'the pregnant Win', who does not consider the possibility that Win's pregnancy might be as assumed as her 'longing' (38).²⁹ Conversely, Haslem does not canvas the possibility that Win's pregnancy is genuine and that it is only her longing that is assumed: 'Win...feigns a pregnancy at her husband's urging' (444); 'Win's feigned pregnancy' (445); '...Win's pregnancy itself is a lie' (445); 'Win's supposed pregnancy' (448); 'her sham pregnancy' (448); 'For the Duchess's onstage pregnancy is not, like Win's, a pretense' (451). Haslem goes on to argue, contrary to Paster, that Win does not need to urinate in Ursula's chamber pot but to defecate, partly because pork is an early modern remedy for a costive bowel and also because defecation belongs to 'a distinctively Jonsonian thematic triad, linked to the urination of Ursula and the vomiting of Dame Overdo'; and that Win's defecation constitutes a symbolic 'miscarriage' (447-448). Her argument about defecation is persuasive.

But for the purposes of my thesis, what is significant is whether Win's 'pregnancy' can be classified as 'true' or 'false'. In one sense, it makes no difference whether or not Win is pregnant or simply assuming pregnancy. As discussed above, Win makes it clear that she is putting on a performance. The acted quality of her 'longing' for pork applies whether or not she is pregnant. If she is pregnant and longing for pork, there is no suggestion that it is apparent before she starts to act it. The same applies if she is pregnant and longs for something other than pork or for nothing; or if she is not pregnant and longs for something. What Levine calls 'Win's staged pregnancy urges' (105), are both 'staged' and understood to be 'pregnancy urges' and the effect is to link falsehood with pregnant women's bodies, unnatural cravings and 'the mother'. Haslem argues that: 'I ha' somewhat o' the mother in me' (1.5.147-148) is a multi-layered pun, referring to 'pregnancy...being a literal "having o' the mother" inside her body'; to having her mother's hypocrisy inside her; and to hysteria, 'the potentially errant humours, or passions, of all those who possess wombs' (445). My reading is similar. The words establish a link between hypocrisy, pregnancy, irrational and possibly dangerous cravings, and the hysteria that is associated with pregnancy, more generally with women and, occasionally, with men. These associations are as equally relevant if Win's hypocrisy extends to faking a pregnancy as they are if her deception simply involves acting out a well-known sign of pregnancy, the irrational longing for forbidden food.

²⁹ Haslem refers to Paster's 'Leaky Vessels: The Incontinent Women of City Comedy', *Renaissance Drama*, 18, 1987, 43-65, the forerunner to her discussion in *The Body Embarrassed* of urinary incontinence in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* and *Bartholomew Fair*. My references to Paster's views are to *The Body Embarrassed*.

I have argued in the previous chapter that, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, Bosola is able to confirm his suspicions that the Duchess is pregnant because of her 'vulturous' eating of the apricots and that her irrational 'pregnant' behaviour is more effective as proof of pregnancy than visual signs; almost as if pregnant cravings are, by themselves, sufficient to establish pregnancy³⁰ In *The Duchess of Malfi*, when Bosola discusses the Duchess's appearance, the audience knows that she is likely to be pregnant and her pregnancy is confirmed when her child appears on stage. In *Bartholomew Fair*, it is impossible to establish Win's pregnancy from the text. Win's mother and Busy accept her pregnant longing without surprise but it is not clear whether this means that her pregnancy explains her longing or is established by it. According to Winwife, Win has 'a strawberry breath, cherry lips, apricot cheeks' (1.2.13). As discussed in the previous chapter, Paré comments on the pregnant woman's pale face, spots, freckles, loss of appetite, sore teeth and gums and constipation (890), presenting a totally different image. But it is also possible that Win's fashionable clothes might be further supported by some make-up. Just before they leave for the fair, Littlewit makes a comment to Busy: 'And truly, I hope my little one will be like me, that cries for pig so, i' the mother's belly' (1.6.90-91). This certainly implies that Win is pregnant but Littlewit's 'device' depends on Busy believing that Win is pregnant and the words do not establish a pregnancy beyond question.³¹

Pregnant women were advised not to indulge in tight lacing in case they injured the foetus. Further, a rounded belly was erotic to the early modern imagination, rather than a sign of pregnancy. It was thus usual to represent pregnancy by unlaced stays, because the swelling abdomen was so linked to sexual desire.³² Littlewit suggests that Win should cut her laces to demonstrate her longing, but Win refuses: 'I can be hypocrite enough, though I were never so straightlaced' (1.5.141-142). She may be laced because she is not pregnant or because she is pregnant but careless about the welfare of the foetus. 'Straightlaced' suggests religious repression rather than the vanity associated with corsets in the pregnancy manuals.

In issuing her instructions to Mooncalf about the price of her roast pork, Ursula tells him 'if she be a great-bellied wife, and long for't, sixpence more for that' (2.2.104-105). She speaks as if it should be possible to distinguish 'a big-bellied wife' from one who is not, but when Win arrives at her booth, with Littlewit, Dame Purecraft and Busy, nothing is said which suggests any such distinction has been made: Knockem sends them all in to the booth; Ursula is tempted to reject them as 'sippers, sippers o' the city' (3.2.99); Knockem comments only on their hypocrisy (3.2.103-109).

When Littlewit leaves Win at the booth, Knockem describes her:

...delicate dark chestnut...with the fine lean head, large forehead, round eyes, even mouth, sharp ears, long neck, thin crest, close withers, plain back deep sides, short fillets, and full flanks: with a round belly, a plump buttock, large thighs, knit knees, straight legs, short pasterns, smooth hoofs, and short heels....(4.5.19-24)

³⁰ Paré lists the Pica as a sign of pregnancy (890).

³¹ His concern that the child will look like him brings in all the concerns expressed in *The Winter's Tale* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* about the use of physical resemblances to judge paternity.

³² Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), 98.

Knockem is both a horse-corser and a pimp and the description of a woman as if she were a horse is another example of the way, in *Bartholomew Fair*, that a woman's bodily shape can alter. A long neck, wide forehead, dark eyes, red cheeks and lips, long arms and legs, large 'but well proportioned' thighs, narrow waist and knees, and wide hips are among the qualities considered beautiful in a Renaissance woman.³³ Parts of Knockem's description might also imply that Win is pregnant: she has 'full flanks', a reminder of the Duchess who is 'fat i' th' flank'; her 'round belly' is like the belly of Hermione which 'rounds apace' (*The Winter's Tale*, 2.1.16); even her 'deep sides' suggest some swelling. But, as noted, a rounded belly does not prove pregnancy; and Win's swellings may denote an erotic appearance, making her especially suitable to work as a prostitute.

Finally: 'Some women when they be with child hate the companie of their husbands' (Guillemeau, 7). Guillemeau's perception that it was necessary to command that all pregnant women 'must likewise abandon *Venus* for feare of shaking the child...' (23), confirms that this lack of enthusiasm for sexual activity during pregnancy only applies to some women. Win accepts kisses from her husband, lets Winwife kiss her when her husband says 'there's no harm in him' (1.2.9); but initially repulses Quarlous (1.3.34). When Mistress Overdo wants to use Ursula's bottle, she is initially denied it: 'My vessel is employed, sir....An honest proctor and his wife are at it within; if she'll stay her time, so' (4.4.188-190). Win may be a pregnant woman who enjoys sexual activity, and one who, rather than 'stay her time', might give birth almost immediately; but the ambiguity of 'at it' and 'stay her time' allows for several variations of meaning.

Bartholomew Fair leaves it open whether or not Win is pregnant and, in doing so, it stresses the theatricality of pregnancy and the problems of distinguishing an acted pregnancy from a real one. There are hints in the text of visual or behavioural signs used to identify early modern pregnancies, but they are inconclusive. Prosthesis can be used to place beyond doubt that a woman character is pregnant but the play pays close attention to Ursula's huge size, suggesting that the actor playing her would also require a prosthesis. The similarity of her body to a pregnant woman's body in its 'fire and fat', would thus reinforce the problems of diagnosis. The play constantly draws attention to the dangers of judging by appearances, the effects of costume to mask reality and the use of spectacle as a means of diverting attention from the true situation. Further, Dame Purecraft and Busy both long for pork, once it is drawn to their attention, reinforcing the fact that signs of 'the Pica' need not necessarily be proof of pregnancy. What *Bartholomew Fair* demonstrates, through Win's pregnancy, is that the condition can only be judged by signs that are equally apparent in women who are not pregnant and, sometimes, in men. *Bartholomew Fair* also reinforces pregnancy as a state requiring control and demonstrates the problems involved in exercising that control effectively. But the fact that Win may not be pregnant, and the uncertainty about what has actually taken place while she is dressed in her green gown, does not divert from pregnancy the implications of uncontrolled craving, leading to sexual abandon.

³³ Sara F. Matthews Grieco 'The Body, Appearance, and Sexuality', Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge (eds), *A History of Women in the West*, 58-59

By leaving it in doubt whether there is a pregnancy, the play thus presents pregnancy as quintessentially theatrical and transfers from pregnancy to theatre the qualities of ambiguity and lack of control which the medical texts identify, confirming that theatre is as dangerous as the antitheatricalists argued. The play also represents pregnancy and, by extension, theatre as excessive but ultimately meaningless. The language used by most characters in *Bartholomew Fair* is excessive. The multiple puns provide scope for a multiplicity of interpretations which, added together, generate a superfluity of meanings. But there is so much matter that meaning can become bogged down. In Littlewit, a man of little wit, the effect is ridiculous. His puppet play turns out to have too much matter but insufficient substance. His wife's pregnancy may turn out, in the future when the play is finished, to be equally insubstantial.

In Jonson, a man of excessively inventive wit, layer upon layer of complex meanings, in this play, breed more meanings and the result is to stress the ambiguity of theatrical appearances, actions and speech and the way in which a multiplicity of meanings reduces the possibilities of definitive interpretation. Ursula fears that the excesses of her body might 'melt away to the first woman, a rib again' (2.2.49-50) or 'dwindle away' (2.2.75). Ursula's body stands for the fair, and thus for theatre, so that what is implied is that it is impossible to get a firm grasp on what is presented in the theatre and that the matter will vanish in a vapour, leaving behind only froth and smoke.

The pregnant boy in *Bartholomew Fair*

The insubstantiality of Win's 'pregnancy' would have been further enhanced by the fact that she was played by a boy in early performances. As discussed in the Introduction, the antitheatricalists relied on the biblical prohibition on cross-dressing in Deuteronomy 22, to attack transvestite boy players in women's roles on stage. Their obsession with the possible effects of boy actors dressed as women is raised explicitly when Puppet Dionysius is attacked by Busy as 'an abomination; for the male among you putteth on the apparel of the female, and the female of the male' (5.5.87-88). Puppet Dionysius says:

It is your old stale argument against the players, but it will not hold against the puppets, for we have neither male nor female amongst us. And that thou may'st see, if thou wilt, like a malicious purblind zeal as thou art!

The puppet takes up his garment. (5.5.91-94)

Edgworth says: 'By my faith, there he has answered you, friend, by plain demonstration' (5.5.95-96). Busy says he is 'confuted' by this 'performance' by the puppet, a likely reference to Gosson's *Playes Confuted in Five Actions*. He agrees to be 'converted' and says he is 'changed'. He will no longer act out his disapproval of theatre but be a 'beholder'. Superficially, one of the most persistent and damaging criticisms made by the antitheatricalists seems to have been dealt with to the satisfaction of one of the most zealous of the breed. The implication is that, despite what appears to be a persistent emphasis on sexual activity, theatre is a sexless place. It would follow that all stage sex is prosthetic, a matter of garment or costume only, so that people do not veil or mask their sex under the clothes of the opposite sex but are creatures only of clothing. As Levine states, 'underneath the puppet's clothing there is nothing there' (89). Despite the use of 'nothing' by critics such as Levine, to describe what Puppet Dionysius reveals when he lifts his garment, this is never stated

by anyone in the play itself. But, early in the puppet play, Leatherhead describes Leander's 'naked leg and goodly calf' and promises: '*By and by, you shall see what Leander doth lack*' (5.4.117). In the context of a description of his body, what Leander lacks is probably genitals, apparently confirmed by a demonstrated equivalent lack in Puppet Dionysius later in the puppet play.

But like so much else in *Bartholomew Fair*, these implications are complicated, so that while Busy seems to accept that the arguments of the antitheatricalists have been met, he is mistaken on a number of grounds. Puppet Dionysius makes a distinction between 'the players' and 'the puppets' and, when he lifts his garment, his action thus has literally nothing to do with boy actors. Even if the puppets are understood to stand for human actors, Puppet Dionysius has not proved they are sexless. He appears to reinforce what Dymrna Callaghan describes, in *Shakespeare Without Women*, as 'an aesthetic of representation that depicts sexual difference defined as the presence or lack of male genitalia' (51). The biblical proscription against transvestism applied equally to women as it did to men but, in the theatre, it was the wearing of women's clothes by boys that was of concern. Male genitals set the cultural standard for assessing a person's sex but, in the theatre, the genitals of the male actors who played the adult male characters were usually irrelevant. Puppet Dionysius is male, until he claims that he is sexless, but the lack of genitals does not prove the puppet has no sex, simply that he is not a male puppet. Within the aesthetic of representation described by Callaghan, Puppet Dionysius might be a woman, cross-dressed as a man, whose lack of genitals confirms her sex.³⁴ In the context of theatre, the sexual indeterminacy which the antitheatricalists feared was attached to the actors who played women. The diatribes, especially by Stubbes, against women who cross-dressed, make it clear that manlike women were also to be feared and that the antitheatricalists would not have been happy about a woman on stage, dressed as a man and acting as a man.³⁵

Even if it is accepted that the puppets stand for boy actors, Puppet Dionysius has not dealt with the attacks of the antitheatricalists effectively, although there are many points of similarity with the all-boy companies, like 'The Children of Her Majesty's Revels', which received its patent in 1610, and which performed Jonson's *Epicoene, or The Silent Woman*, at the Whitefriars Theatre, round about that time.³⁶ The puppets lack the capacity to move independently of the 'motion-man' and the boys in children's companies had no capacity for independent action. They were not shareholders and they depended on adult males, like Jonson, for their plays. In a sense, they were owned by theatre managements, in the way that Leatherhead carried his puppets round in a box. Callaghan, in her discussion of the working conditions of

³⁴ 'Puppet' had a variety of meanings. See *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 1709: Sense 1: 'A contemptuous term for a person (usu. a woman) 1586', the sense used by Stubbes when he speaks of fashionable women as 'puppits'. See also Sense 2. 'A figure, (usu. small) representing a human being; a child's doll 1562'. Sense 3. 'A human figure with jointed limbs, moved by means of strings or wires; esp. one of the figures in a puppet-show 1538'. Sense 3.b: 'A person whose acts are suggested and controlled by another 1550'.

³⁵ On Levine's assessment of the fears of the antitheatricalists, the puppets might change sex and become men, when their genitals would become visible. The reported cases of individuals changing sex were of women turning into men, as discussed in the following chapter.

³⁶ See Campbell, Introduction, xvi.

boys in theatrical companies, includes examples where the boys were taken without parental consent to work in the theatre.³⁷

It is Leatherhead, as motion-man, who lifts Puppet Leander's garments, also a reminder of the criticism by antitheatricalists that adult men are obsessed with the clothes worn by boy actors and with what lies under them. The invitation by Puppet Hero to 'Kiss the whore o' the arse' (5.4.316) implies that the boys may have been corrupted by the theatrical experience to solicit such attentions. Cokes makes an implied reference to the homoerotic implications of boys in theatre, which so concerned the antitheatricalists, when he asks whether there are any 'pretty impudent boys...as they have at the other houses' (5.3.57-58). Smaller players, Cokes thinks, should cost less to feed and get drunk (5.3.85-87). Later, he says: 'I am in love with the actors already...' (5.3.116). Callaghan notes the link between theatres and brothels in 'other houses', arguing that the boys are 'apparently made available for sexual titillation in an institutional configuration more akin to prostitution than indenture' (69-70).

But, in a company where all the actors are young boys, while there is essentially no difference between men and women on stage, other than their clothes and make-up, the boys are not sexless. In a culture where sex is determined by the presence or absence of male genitals, the boys, in what they 'lack', might all be described as closer to women than men. This does not mean that they were completely sexless. The anxiety expressed about homoeroticism by the antitheatricalists, which is evoked in *Bartholomew Fair* in the behaviour of Cokes, was directed specifically to the sex of the boys, as boys.

Busy thus appears to have been persuaded by appearances into accepting an argument which is spurious and his conversion serves to make him appear ridiculous. But although he is persuaded by inadequate arguments, the puppet play highlights the issue of boy actors. It thus compels the audience to attend to the boy players, dressed as women, who are on stage as actors, and as members of the audience at the puppet play. From early in *Bartholomew Fair* there are reference points to draw attention to the boy actor playing Win, through a focus on the character as a woman, in a context that reinforces theatricality. Littlewit parades Win before his friends as a spectacle and a desirable sex object for them to kiss and tells her to act out pregnant longings, as a means of getting access to a theatrical experience. He thus places emphasis on the actor who plays the woman who must act the longings. The early modern audience was thus encouraged to imagine Win as a woman who might be pregnant, as a woman who will act pregnant longings, and as a boy playing a woman who may or may not be pregnant. Later they were invited to speculate about whether she remained a wife or had become a prostitute.

Once the early modern audience was reminded that Win was played by a boy, they would have found it hard to 'see' a pregnant woman beneath his outfit, regardless of the clothes worn by the boy actor or how 'pregnant' Win's figure appeared on stage. Busy's exchange with the puppet would have invited the audience to speculate about

³⁷ See 67-72. Callaghan also discusses the practice of castration as a means of ensuring that a boy retains a feminine voice, noting that the children in English companies were not physically castrated but commenting on an emotional castration, 67. There might be a suggestion, in the sexlessness of Leatherwood's puppets, that he has intervened surgically to make them so.

what would be found if the boy playing Win were to be genitally unmasked by having his skirts lifted. The audience knew that they would not see a pregnant woman. Nor would they have seen a wooden puppet. They might have seen the body of a boy actor who lacked a woman's womb. Or they might have seen a boy actor's body, so masked or compacted with clouts of padding that they could see nothing. In all cases, the theatricality of Win's 'pregnancy' would have been reinforced and the likelihood that it was genuine at the dramatic level would have been reduced.

In early performances, *Bartholomew Fair* thus asked the audience to look closely at a woman, whose tenuous pregnancy was made even less plausible because the play invited the audience not just to notice the boy who played her, but to think specifically about antitheatrical attacks on gender cross-casting and stage transvestism. I suggest that, as well as the limited relevance of the puppet play to boys in adult companies, Busy's diatribe against theatre is also shown as pathetic because he has, throughout the play, accepted as women, all the women characters played by boys: Dame Purecraft, Ursula, 'the womb and bed of enormity', and Win.³⁸ In particular, very early in the play, he has been taken in by a performance of 'pregnant longing' by a woman character who could not be pregnant because she was acted by a boy. When Littlewit speaks to him about his hopes for the appearance of the 'little one...i' the mother's belly', Busy says: 'Very likely, exceeding likely, very exceeding likely' (1.6.92).

It is difficult in *Bartholomew Fair* to make a firm distinction between the dramatic and the metatheatrical because of the numbers of performances within the play, and the way characters switch between being actors in one performance to being the audience at another. But to the extent that the puppet play might appear to take away the sexual ambivalence of the boy actor, the pregnant boy in early performances would have restored it. I discussed, early in this chapter, Levine's description of *Bartholomew Fair* as anti-antitheatrical in that, while the play attacked the enemies of theatre, it did not offer even grudging support for theatre. On the one hand, events in *Bartholomew Fair* are presented as 'confuting' the antitheatricalists by demonstrating that they are hypocritical and ineffective and that their arguments are hollow and lacking in substance. But the boy actor 'playing' pregnancy was also the ultimate sign of the power of theatre to 'convince', despite evidence to the contrary. *Bartholomew Fair* suggests that it is not the body beneath but the power of the prosthesis in which the enormity of theatre lies.

³⁸ I note again that Ursula was one of the characters named by Kathleen McLuskie as part of her argument that 'the performance would be rendered nonsensical if attention was paid to the metatheatrical implications of the boy actor to the exclusion of the dramatic impact of the play ('The Act, the Role, and the Actor, 120-130 at 120-121). In my view, the anomalies which Jonson draws from the acting of pregnant behaviour by a boy actor can only be heightened by the representation of quintessential womanhood by a boy actor.

Chapter Seven

Pregnancy as a Dance: *More Dissemblers Besides Women*

I now return to Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women*.¹ Antonio, the woman disguised as a page, is pregnant to her lover, Lactantio, who has used her as a servant while he pursues more recent sexual interests.² Antonio, whose pregnancy has gone unnoticed, has moved to the house of the Duchess of Milan where she is being taught performance arts. She cannot perform the strenuous leaps necessary in the boy's part of the cinquepace or galliard. When she tries to avoid the lesson: 'I'm not for lofty tricks' (V.i.217), Siquapace says: 'such another word, down goes your hose boy' (V.i.218). Antonio tries to dance, falls and calls for a midwife (V.i.223).³

The dancing master cries:

A midwife? by this light, the boy's with child!
A miracle! some woman is the father.
The world's turned upside down: sure if men breed,
Women must get; one never could do both yet.—
No marvel you danc'd close-knee'd the sinquapace.—
Put up my fiddle, here's a stranger case. (V.i.224-229)

Pregnancy is only one aspect of *More Dissemblers*, which also includes a widowed Duchess who has resolved to live a celibate life and another heroine, Aurelia, who disguises herself as a young man and as a gypsy. The play makes constant self-conscious gestures to its status as theatre, especially to the women characters in earlier plays who disguise themselves as boys for all or part of the action. Lactantio suggests to Aurelia, that she adopt men's clothes 'for our safeties' (I.i.41-47). Viola in *Twelfth Night*, adopts her transvestite disguise for safety and finds her lover later.

¹ All quotations from *More Dissemblers* are from A. H. Bullen (ed. and intro.), *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, (London: 1885; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1964) Vol. VI, 376-481. Scholars had given *More Dissemblers* a composition date of c. 1615. See, for example, John F. McElroy, *Parody and Burlesque in the Tragicomedies of Thomas Middleton* (Salzburg: Instit für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1972), 106. Recent scholarship gives it a composition date c. 1619, for example Brian Loughrey and Neil Taylor (eds and intro.), *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays*, who give a date of c. 1619, xxx. For other references to the date of *More Dissemblers*, see Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play*, who assigns *More Dissemblers* a composition date of '1619?' (52). The play was first published in 1657, in an octavo volume with *Women Beware Women*. Bullen notes a diary entry of Sir Henry Herbert, dated 17 October, 1623, describing *More Dissemblers* as 'an old play', 'allowed by Sir George Bucke' but comments that 'old play' simply meant 'previously licensed' and that, as Sir George had only retired in 1622, the play may not have been licensed much before that (373). Andrew Gurr, in *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, lists *More Dissemblers* as a play of the King's Men, played at the court before the Prince on 18 January, 1624, (387 and 389). As *Bartholomew Fair* was written and performed in 1614, *More Dissemblers* would follow it, even if it had been both written and performed in 1615.

² I commented in the Introduction that Antonio has no woman's name in the play. She is usually called 'the page' or 'the boy'. I call her Antonio, and like the other women characters I describe, I use female pronouns. I will discuss Antonio's lack of a real name later in the chapter.

³ I think we are to assume that Antonio goes into labour at this stage. The Duchess later says to the Cardinal that Lactantio and Antonio are married and he 'durst not own her for his wife till now;' (V.ii.219). She says the marriage took place:

Near forty weeks ago: he knows the time, sir,
Better than I can tell him, and the poor gentlewoman
Better than he. (V.ii.214-217)

Women in the world of *More Dissemblers* don men's clothes to accompany their lovers. As Michael Shapiro notes, when Lactantio says 'our safeties', he is less concerned with Aurelia's safety than he is to conceal his relationships with women from his uncle, on whom he is financially dependent.⁴ Despite the differences, there are distinct reminders of Viola in Antonio. She has been overheard lamenting a shipwreck in which all her friends were: 'Swallow'd, with all their substance' (I.ii.157). Dondolo's comment to Antonio: 'thou wouldst have made a very pretty foolish waiting-woman but for one thing' (I.iv.61-62) recalls Viola's: 'Pray God defend me! A little thing would make me tell them how much I lack of a man' (III.i.294). The audience could also have been reminded of Olivia in *Twelfth Night* by the Duchess of Milan, who has decided to remain celibate and whose household, without the control of a man, becomes disorderly, except that the Duchess remains unmarried at the end of the play.

Other aspects of *More Dissemblers* evoke characters or theatrical effects in other plays. Aurelia uses mock language when she attempts to deceive her father, of the kind used to deceive Paroles in *All's Well*: 'Loff tro veen, tantrumbo, hoff tufttee, locumber shaw' (*More Dissemblers*, I.ii.199-200); 'Porta tartarassa' (*All's Well*, 4.3.116); *Bosko chimurko...Boblibindo chicurmurko* (4.3.121-122). The difference is that Aurelia's father is not taken in by the language. And although the roles are quite different, the widowed Duchess and the Italian Cardinal suggest *The Duchess of Malfi*. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, Bosola describes the child he envisages in the womb of the Duchess as a 'young springal cutting a caper in her belly'. In *More Dissemblers*, it may look as if a young springal in Milan is trying to cut a caper on stage, but the audience knows that what they are supposed to see is a woman with a child in her belly.

In its treatment of pregnancy, *More Dissemblers* can be read as a disguise plot play which takes the comedy of the genre to the limits. It can also be read as the ultimate questioning of sexual difference through the 'pregnant boy', using disguise to heighten the blurring of sexual boundaries. Most recent scholarship concentrates on disguise and its homoerotic implications and expresses less interest in Antonio as a stage representation of a woman 'with child'.⁵ The element of disguise is central to

⁴ See Shapiro, *Gender in Play*, 55.

⁵ Shapiro, who makes many of the comments I make about disguise, thinks Antonio's plight also draws attention to the boy playing the Duchess, 52-61, at 59. Bruce Smith finds that Middleton adopts an 'exceptionally high-spirited' satiric-comedic way with the female page's part and, when the mistress/page's sex is discovered, 'spectators are invited to laugh at the sport, not give themselves up to seduction'. See 'Making a difference: Male/ male "desire" in tragedy, comedy and tragi-comedy', Susan Zimmerman (ed.), *Erotic politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992) 127-146, at 140. For Zimmerman, 'the device of the cross-dressed page functions as the occasion for gratuitous scenes of bawdy humour with a male homoerotic orientation' in the context of the 'erotic comeuppance' due to the Duchess of Milan because she has vowed eternal chastity. See 'Disruptive desire: Artifice and indeterminacy in Jacobean comedy', *Erotic Politics*, 39-63, esp. 52-54, at 52. George E. Rowe argues that *More Dissemblers* explores the less attractive and, at times, frightening aspects of the love and renewal celebrated by traditional comedy. While the loosening of the Page's thighs which coincides with Aurelia's release from the fort might suggest liberation, the play is a reminder that fertility is not an unalloyed blessing but 'a brutal fact of nature'. See *Thomas Middleton and the New Comedy Tradition*, (Lincoln Nebr. and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 156-175, at 173-174. McElroy finds that: 'The Page...is ironically the play's real romantic heroine and she alone receives a measure of our sympathy....her delivery scene...is sufficiently physical to serve as a reminder of the realities of sex that other women choose either to not recognize

Footnote(s) continue on following page(s)

the handling of Antonio's pregnancy. Further, the disclosure of Antonio's pregnancy during a dancing lesson stresses the nature of pregnancy as a performance. Siquapace treats a pregnant boy as a reversal of men's and women's roles in procreation and the play depicts the enormous social differences that flow from men's and women's physical differences. It also shows how, in many respects, boys and women are in an equally vulnerable position, despite the very different lives they lead. Despite an emphasis on the physical body, sexual difference is more a matter of gender than sex for much of *More Dissemblers*, because other characters are so blinded by cultural expectations that they cannot tell the difference between a woman and a boy, even when the woman is pregnant.

I will start with a discussion of Antonio's disguise and the responses of the other characters. Next I will explore the role of performance in *More Dissemblers*, especially the role of the dance. Next I will elaborate on the one-sex model of sexual difference. All these issues are then combined in an examination of Siquapace's response to Antonio's pregnancy. As with other chapters, I will discuss, in a separate section at the end of the chapter, the fact that Antonio was played by a boy in early performances.

'I fear sir, I'm with child'

Antonio, as she is presented on stage, is a totally ambiguous figure, a pregnant woman whose appearance struggles with her apparent gender role as a boy. She is in a highly confusing situation, so much so that when she first appears on stage the audience might assume that she is Aurelia, another mistress of Lactantio, who also planned to wear men's clothes as a disguise. Lactantio tells Aurelia:

But for thy further safety, I've provided
A shape, that at first sight will start thy modesty,
And make thee blush perhaps, but 'twill away
After a qualm or two. Virginity
Has been put often to those shifts before thee
Upon extremities; a little boldness
Cannot be call'd immodesty, especially
When there's no means without it for our safeties. (I.i.40-47)

'Shift' can mean a change of clothes, especially women's underclothes, but it can also mean a device or stratagem. It then appears that Aurelia is not the page but is disguised as a 'young gentleman' (I.ii.139-140). The page then tells Lactantio that she is pregnant: 'I fear, sir, I'm with child' (I.ii.145). Lactantio responds: 'With child? Peace, peace; speak low....Beshrew my heart for that!' (I.ii.146-147), suggesting that at some stage there has been a shift in his affections. Lactantio is

or to cloak in conventional rituals. The author therefore uses her as a satiric norm for measuring the unreality and callousness of the life around her. The same holds true for the scene [V.i] as a whole; for by portraying in it the traditional aristocratic pastimes of song and dance as occasions for smutty jesting and crude sexual bartering (see V, i, 126 ff.), he succeeds in travestying the very idea of court life as it exists in the play, and, by extension, the assumption of its moral code' (153-154). For some nineteenth century views, see A. H. Bullen, in the Introduction to the 1885 edition of Middleton's *Works*. He thought that 'the girl-page who accompanies the profligate Lactantio is a pathetic little figure; but it is a pity that Middleton adopted so intolerably gross a device for discovering her condition to the Duchess' (lxxvii). Algernon Swinburne wrote: 'The opening of *More Dissemblers besides Women* is as full at once of comic and of romantic promise as the upshot of the whole is unsatisfactory-a most lame and impotent conclusion'. See, Havelock Ellis (ed.), Algernon Swinburne (intro.) *Thomas Middleton* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1887), xix.

revealed as totally lacking in concern for both Antonio and Aurelia, being most interested in immediate sexual gratification and money. The fact that he has two cross-dressed mistresses also draws attention to the added difficulties involved in disguising a young woman who is pregnant.

The shape to which Lactantio refers and the shifts to be used to achieve it are a direct reminder that, on stage, shape changing is achieved through clothes. Clothes can cover an inappropriate shape, as Lactantio recognises when he says of Antonio:

I must devise some shift when she grows big,
These masculine hose will shortly appear too little....(III.i.23-24)

Clothes can also be used to cover a prosthesis, thus suggesting something that is not present, like a pregnancy or male genitals. But they can also cover an absence or lack of something that might be assumed to be present. To Dondolo, his comment to Antonio: 'thou wouldst have made a very pretty foolish waiting-woman but for one thing' (I.iv.61-62), means that because Antonio is a boy, he has one thing that prevents him being a woman. The audience knows that because Antonio is a woman she lacks the very thing to which Dondolo refers. But there is a limit to how far clothes should be able to transform the wearer's appearance, as Aurelia points out when she is disguised as a gypsy: 'This shape's too cunning for 'em; all the sport was,/ The porter would needs know his fortune of me/ As I pass'd by him' (IV.i.35-37). She told him that he should get his eyes checked: 'He'd lose his sight clean long before he dies;' (IV.i.41). Earlier, she has failed to deceive her father in her gentleman's disguise: 'Is this a shape for reputation/ And modesty to masque in?' (I.ii.204).

The audience knows Antonio is pregnant but, apart from Lactantio, other characters do not. As discussed in Chapters Two and Five, early modern medical texts and pregnancy manuals stress the difficulty of diagnosing pregnancy through physical signs and describe cases where a woman who looked pregnant was found to suffer from some other condition. To some extent, this is borne out by the fact that Antonio can tell she is pregnant because of personal knowledge. But however difficult it may have been to achieve an accurate diagnosis of pregnancy simply through a woman's appearance, especially when she was wearing clothes, pregnancy involves physical changes in a woman which are difficult to ignore. Lactantio can detect changes in Antonio's physical appearance but other characters do not notice them. He notices how pale she is (I.ii.143) and that her bodily shape is changing.

Other characters comment on Antonio's pale skin, prettiness and vulnerability and 'his' similarity to a girl, as discussed below, but they do not notice any signs of pregnancy. Because they think Antonio is a boy, it does not occur to them that 'he' could be pregnant, although women's clothes would have been far more effective in disguising a pregnancy than the clothes worn by a page. Compared to a loose-bodied gown, which can conceal a swelling belly, a doublet and hose would accentuate it. Antonio's role as a boy thus makes her pregnancy invisible to other characters, even as her disguise should have the effect of revealing it. Because visual evidence is interpreted through gender expectations, Antonio's pregnancy is thus invisible in gender terms, despite its apparent physical visibility. Other characters, such as the Cardinal, the Duchess, Dondolo and Sinquapace respond to Antonio in ways that they all would consider inappropriate if they knew she was a woman, let alone one who was pregnant. Each one demonstrates a slight variation in attitude to women, boys and the moral and social precepts applicable to them. Their responses are complicated by constant use of *double entendre* based on the fact that words used

about a boy can have a different meaning when said of a woman and because language which describes physical differences can also invoke gendered rules about behaviour.

The Cardinal is obsessed with controlling the sexual activities of other people, to a degree that suggests he may have concerns about his own chastity. He claims to worship the chastity of the Duchess and her vow to remain unmarried: 'Here I stand up in admiration,/ And bow to the chaste health of our great duchess,/ Kissing her constant name' (I.ii.13-15). 'I stand up in admiration' might, alternatively, imply that it is not simply the constancy of the Duchess he loves and that he wants to kiss more than her name. Later, In Act IV, scene i, he argues with the Duchess against her vow of chastity. It seems he does not know his own mind or his own body. He believes that he has always been an 'old man', when it comes to pleasure and women, but he may innocently conceal from himself a homoerotic interest in Antonio. He describes Antonio as:

...The prettiest servant
That ever man was bless'd with! 'tis so meek,
So good, so gentle;...(I.ii.151-153)

As noted by Lisa Jardine, in relation to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*:

Submissiveness, coyness, dependence, passivity, exquisite
whiteness and beauty compound in the blushing (yet wilful) boy to
create a figure vibrant with erotic interest *for men*.

Eroticism and gender roles are at odds here. According to early modern gender codes, sweetness and gentleness are qualities generally thought to apply to an idealised form of female virtue and the Cardinal sees that Antonio is similar to a woman and that she is vulnerable: 'What ails this pretty boy to weep so often?...He is so soft, th' unkindness of a word/ Melts him into a woman...I've promised thee to one will make much of thee, /And hold thy weak youth in most dear respect' (III.ii.131-139). Yet because he thinks she is a boy, he treats her differently to the way he would treat a woman. Most women have 'momentary frantic follies' he can only pity (I.ii.10-12), with the Duchess as the sole exception.

Dondolo notes, much more consciously than the Cardinal, that Antonio is like a girl, in the way, for example, she tries to mount a horse: 'he was fain to lead him to a high rail, and get up like a butter-wench' (III.i.89-90). He watches Antonio's 'little buttocks' (I.iv.26). He even makes comments about Antonio in the context of childbirth. When Antonio says she lacks the skill to sing, he asks: 'why should singing not be as well got without skill as the getting of children' (I.iv.41-56). He says Antonio cannot 'make him ready' (dress himself) and comments that 'I am fain to truss his points' (III.i.80-81).⁷ He finds Antonio, 'as sweet a breasted page as ever lay at his master's feet in a truckle-bed' (I.iv.100-102), a reminder that servants slept together segregated by sex but often sharing the same bed, and the opportunities this gave for clandestine sexual encounters. It becomes clear that Dondolo has been

⁶ *Still Harping*, 18.

⁷ 'Truss his points' means 'tie the tags of his breeches' III.i.81, fn. 2. Callaghan discusses the implications of 'trussing', in her discussion of John Marsden's *Antonio and Mellida*, as 'a manipulation of the penis as an object', 51. Trussing involved either 'the manner in which the penis hangs in clothing ("trussing hose")', which appears to be Dondolo's primary meaning, but trussing also implied the retraction of the testicles and penis inside the body (perhaps achieved by binding the genitals to the body), 51.

disappointed in Antonio: 'a little tit-mouse page...That's good for nothing but to carry toothpicks' (III.i.77-78).

Dondolo claims that Antonio has displayed an unusual reserve:

There's no good fellowship in this dandiprat,
This dive-dapper, as is in other pages:
They'd go a-swimming with me familiarly
I' th' heat of summer.....
But I could never get the little monkey yet
To put off his breeches:
A tender, puling, nice, chitty-fac'd squall 'tis. (III.i.91-97)⁸

Dondolo is very aware of the androgyny involved in current fashions: young men wear shirts like women's smocks, and their hair is longer than women's, so they can lie in bed with their sweethearts and escape the constable's notice (I.iv.71-77). In his comment about the 'one thing' which prevents Antonio from being 'a pretty foolish waiting woman' he makes it clear that he knows that boys and women are very similar. But his interest in Antonio is as a boy, so that what his mind expects to find under the page's tights is a boy's body, to such an extent that he can imagine it and ignore the woman's pregnant body that is really there. Stephen Orgel comments, on the argument that women's clothes on boys were an enticement to homoeroticism: 'Dresses are concealing; it is the tights and codpieces of male apparel that are revealing and tempting'.⁹ Dondolo acts as if it is the breeches themselves that excite his homoerotic interest, not what they cover.

The Duchess also sees Antonio as 'a pretty boy':

I never saw a meeker, gentler youth,
Yet made for man's beginning; how unfit
Was that poor fool to be Lactantio's page!
He would have spoil'd him quite; in one year utterly;
There had been no hope of him. (IV.ii.60-64)

A woman 'made for man's beginning' is, ambiguously, a different matter: the woman with whom a man will first have intercourse and the woman to bear a male child. In the same way, when she tells Antonio not to be fearful of serving her: 'There's nothing in thee but thy modest fear', (IV.ii.72), it is clear to the audience that Antonio does have something in her to fear and that it is not honest. The Duchess says: 'It shall be my care to have him well brought up/ As a youth apt for good things' (IV.ii.74-75). As Antonio comments:

Singing and dancing! 'las my case is worse!
I rather need a midwife and a nurse.. (IV.ii.88-89)

Once the Duchess knows Antonio is a woman, she dismisses her and marries her off to Lactantio. Siquapace, who is required to look closely at Antonio when he gives him the dancing lesson says: 'He's too little for any woman's love i' th' town' (V.i.146). He is irritated that the Duchess favours Antonio, 'loves him well' as Celia

⁸ 'Dandiprat' is 'a small 16-c. coin worth three halfpence'; or 'a small, insignificant, or contemptible fellow', *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. I, 487. A 'divedapper' was an early form of 'dab-chick', a water-bird, III.i.91, fn 5.

⁹ *Impersonations*, 34.

tells him (V.i 145). Siquapace thinks the Duchess should favour him, instead: 'one of my pitch [height]/ Were somewhat tolerable' (V.i.146-148).¹⁰

The other characters all see Antonio quite differently because they think he is a boy. But Antonio's situation illustrates many similarities between the lives of women and boys. Orgel's comments about the very relative freedom enjoyed by boys, as compared to women, are particularly relevant. In *More Dissemblers*, boys and women share a similar vulnerability. They do not have control over their lives or their bodies and can only operate through the protection of others. They are sexually vulnerable and are expected to be subservient to older men. Lactantio preys on Aurelia, whose father plans her future without regard to her own wishes. Even Lactantio's future depends on pleasing the Cardinal. The Duchess forms part of the system that controls young people but is also constrained by social and religious pressures, based on early seventeenth century attitudes to the remarriage of widows. As the Cardinal points out, she has been bound by a 'forced vow, that was but knit/ By the strange jealousy of your dying lord' (IV.i.37-38). But he says this in the course of applying pressure on her to marry his nephew. Both boys and women have the same need for financial security; which depends on finding a senior person to please. Finding a place in the world of *More Dissemblers* is divided on gender lines but also by rank and age. While it is certainly better to be a man than a woman like Antonio, it is easier still to be a father (or uncle) than a son (or nephew).

'I think he'll take his prick-song well'

Antonio is required to perform different roles for different masters who treat her differently depending on what they understand her sex to be. But in all cases she is in a relationship in which she is partly like a subordinate member of a family and partly like a servant to a master. Lactantio stresses their master and servant relationship when he abuses her for her pregnancy: 'Well fare those that never shamed their master!' (III.i.6.7). The Cardinal has 'promised' Antonio to the Duchess, and she moves to the Duchess's household. While there, as a page, she will not be expected to perform menial tasks, but Antonio is in the service of the Duchess who, at the play's end says to Lactantio: 'No page serves me more that once dwells with you' (V.ii.266).

Antonio is also expected to perform and, in this respect, her position is very like a boy apprentice in a theatrical company. The relationship of the boy apprentices and the more experienced and more famous actors who were their masters was in some cases closer to a family one than that of master and servant. Although some of the boy actors developed their own fame and were known by their own names, some boys were known also, or only, by reference to their master: 'Thomas Downton's boy Thomas Parsons', 'Robinson's boy or apprentice', 'Thomas Downton's bigger boy' and 'Mr Dengytens little boy'.¹¹ The implication is that some boys, while not legally

¹⁰ See V.i.147, fn. 1.

¹¹ G. E. Bentley's, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 123-124. There may be a suggestion of the ambiguous nature of the apprenticeship of boys to senior actors when there was no actors' guild, when Nicholas, Siquapace's usher, dances in Act V, scene i. Siquapace laments that the dancers do not have a hall, despite their need to practice: 'Why should the leaden-heel'd plumber have his hall,/ And the light-footed dancer none at all' (V.i.173-174). The halls of livery companies, such as the Merchant Taylors and the

Footnote(s) continue on following page(s)

or financially independent of the senior actor to whom they were apprenticed, had their own identity and renown and did not require further identification. Many others were less well-known and had no independent existence in the minds of theatre-goers, in the way some children are identified primarily as the child of their famous parent. Apart from her relationship to a senior, Antonio has no existence in *More Dissemblers*. She appears in the list of *Dramatis Personae* simply as 'Page, Lactantio's mistress'. When questioned, she tells the Duchess her name is Antonio, but she is generally known as 'the page' or 'the boy'.

Like her name, Antonio's position throughout the play is anomalous, especially after she moves to the household of the Duchess. This might be thought to give her protection from Dondolo but leads to her condition being publicly exposed. What is expected of the boy page in the Duchess's household is also unclear. In the dancing lesson, Antonio is being taught the galliard, a 'vigorous 16th century European court dance', known in England as the cinquepace (five step) 'on account of its four hopping steps and one high leap'.¹² There are some hints of Elizabeth I in the Duchess, who has proclaimed a vow of future chastity and whose courtiers plead with her to marry: 'Do you profess constancy and yet live alone?/ How can that hold? You're constant then to none;/ That's a dead virtue; goodness must have practice,/ Or else it ceases' (IV.ii.26-29). Elizabeth's motto was *Semper eadem* (Always faithful).¹³ Her court was famed for lively entertainments and she enjoyed dancing: 'Six or seven galliards a morning, besides music and singing, constituted her morning exercise' in 1589.¹⁴

Elizabeth was patron of a royal company of players, the Queen's Men.¹⁵ Andrew Gurr describes how the choirs of the Chapel Royal and Windsor Chapel, both affiliated with the royal household, practised playing as well as singing, and had taken part in performances during the Christmas season at court since before the time of Henry VIII.¹⁶ Around 1578, the two groups merged and performed as a theatrical company under various names, including the Children of Her Majesty's Chapel and the Children of St Paul's (Gurr, 223). Dymrna Callaghan reports an account by a visitor in 1602, of 'a number of young boys [kept by the Queen] who have to apply themselves zealously to the art of singing'.¹⁷ As well as having links to these companies, Elizabeth is also recorded as taking an interest in individual performers, such as 'a very pretty boy' whose performance she saw at Oxford, and who was brought into her chamber so he could repeat his speech for Cecil.¹⁸

Drapers, were themselves used as theatres, as indicated in a map in Stephen Mullaney's *Place of the Stage*, 28-29.

¹² 'Galliard', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago and London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1977), 1985), *Micropaedia*, Vol. 5, 91. The galliard originated in fifteenth century Italy and 'was especially fashionable from c. 1530 to 1620 in France, Spain and England (91).

¹³ Barish notes that '*Semper idem*, speaks only of the certainty with which she can be counted on to remain herself, not of the nature of that self' (104-105).

¹⁴ J. E. Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), 323.

¹⁵ For the early years of the Queen's Men, see Gurr, 196-211, at 196, which discusses a period during which her 'players' may have been tumblers or performers of the sort of 'activities' that did not need a playscript (196).

¹⁶ *Shakespearean Playing Companies*, 222-223

¹⁷ *Shakespeare Without Women*, 67.

¹⁸ Callaghan, 152. She describes reports of abuse of the boys and the practice of kidnapping boys for the Chapel Royal, 67-69.

The Duchess also sees Antonio as a 'pretty boy' and plans to 'have him well brought up/ As a youth apt for good things' (IV.ii.74-75). It then appears that she has arranged singing lessons for him and she orders Celia to organise time with the dancing master. She is concerned that, left much longer with Lactantio, Antonio would have been 'spoiled' but it is not clear what it is about the page that she wishes to preserve. The most straightforward answer is that the singing and dancing lessons are a form of education to provide a decent up-bringing for a young man who, as the Duchess thinks, is already on his way towards manhood, ('made for man's beginning'), but needs assistance to advance in the world. Antonio is thus expected to work for advancement and the singing and dancing, which are appropriate to a boy's future life at court, provide a contrast to the sort of work expected of women, bearing children. The Duchess may wish to keep the page young and pretty as a future performer of women's roles or, possibly, she thinks Lactantio is exploiting his page sexually, a correct, if also mistaken, assumption. But the idea of 'bringing him up' can also suggest sexual stimulation of a youth who has not yet begun to be a man, as part of an education in sexual skills. As a future lover, the boy should be preserved from the advances of men. Antonio's concern that 'I was not born to those deserts to please so great a mistress' can mean that she lacks skill as a singer and dancer to perform to the standard at court. But it might also imply that Antonio thinks that, because of her birth as a woman, she is not designed to give pleasure to a woman.

The ambiguity of the Duchess's language is matched by that of Celia: 'Sir, I'm of that opinion; being kept hard to't./ In troth I think he'll take his prick-song well' (V.i.1-2). 'Prick-song' is a musical term referring to 'a written descant, accompanying a simple melody', but with obvious genital implications.¹⁹ At present, Celia thinks: 'His prick-song very poorly; he is one/ Must have it put into him' (V.i.94-95); but, she adds: 'He will do well in time, being kept under' (V.i.43). She may mean that Antonio will improve his ability to perform if he adopts a subordinate sexual position to a man. Crotch the singing master threatens to 'notch' up Antonio's faults and speaks of other 'proper gentlemen/ Whom I have nipp'd i' th' ear' (V.i.46-50). In the context of a singing lesson, one implication is that he will castrate Antonio to preserve the page's singing voice.²⁰

'I can dance nothing but ill-favouredly'

Celia herself is receiving 'tuition' from Sinquapace in the coranto, 'a quick and lively dance'.²¹ Dancing was attacked by the antitheatricalists, as akin to theatre, in the opportunities it provided for lustful encounters. The full title of an anonymous tract published in 1581, sums up sixteenth century criticisms of dancing: *A Treatise of Daunces wher it is shewed that they are as it were accessories and dependants (or thinges annexed) to whore-dome: where also by the way is touched and proued, that*

¹⁹ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 1668.

²⁰ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. II, 'Nip': Sense 3: 'to check the growth or development of (something), as by pinching off the buds or shoots of a plant' (1405); 'Notch' means an incision (1415-1416) and has a similar derivation to 'nick', which is defined as 'a notch, groove or slit in something, (1401). See Callaghan, on similar use of 'nick' in John Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* and the 'economic and sexual practices [which] moulded the boys aesthetically, if not surgically, into the shape of eunuchs', 67.

²¹ See V.i.75, note 1.

*Playes are ioyned and knit together in a rancke or rowe with them.*²² Freeman in his Preface to the Garland reprint of *A Treatise of Daunces*, comments that the remarks in it about plays and players 'are incidental to the main assault on dancing, and the impulse to draw them in may have been the current vogue for such writings, as exemplified by Gosson, Lodge, Munday....' (7).

Stubbes describes 'pestiferous dauncing' in Aiglina, as an abuse which 'in these daies, is an introduction to whoredom, a preparative to wantonness, a provocative to uncleanness & an introite to all kinds of lewdness....'²³ But 'in Aiglina it is counted a vertue, and an ornament to a man, yea and the only way to attaine to promotion & aduancement, as experience teacheth' (Sig. O^r). There are further shades of the court of Elizabeth I, and of the Duchess, in the suggestion that those who want to get ahead must be able to dance.

Stubbes is also concerned that the sexes should not dance with each other, to avoid any provocation to lust and venery. He may be aware of some inconsistency in his suggestion that dancing would be less dangerous if it was conducted with members of the same sex, given his concern about the all-male stage. His apparent inconsistency is similar to the fears of the antitheatricalists that those in the theatre will be effeminated by watching boys play women, while simultaneously they are forging sexual contracts with members of the opposite sex in the audience. Stubbes ends by condemning all contemporary dancing. He argues that if cockroach eggs can be made good food for humans and spider's webs can 'be made good cloth for mans body, then may it be prouided that dancing is good and an exercise fit for a christian man to follow, but not before' (Sig. O3^r).

Dancing and lust may have been inseparable in the minds of the antitheatricalists but at the court, far from being viewed as sinful, dancing was part of a ritualised code of behaviour, based on external signs:

The complete externalization of the rules of behaviour is perhaps best illustrated by dancing. Through the codification of a rhetoric of gestures, this quintessential social art presented the individual body as part of a group, governed by its norms.²⁴

Couples danced the galliard together or separately, dancing the length of the ballroom, with the men leaping higher than the women and it appears that 'in the wooing pantomime of the early galliard, the men pursued their coyly retreating partners'.²⁵ Therefore, for a woman to dance the galliard in the manner of a man, as Antonio does in *More Dissemblers*, is in itself a disruption of gender roles, not merely in relation to court decorum but as specifically directed to sexually explicit wooing.²⁶ The disruption is even greater if the woman is pregnant when, according to early modern pregnancy manuals, she should be at home avoiding strenuous exercise. In a society in which pregnant women were forbidden to ride horses or ride in coaches; performing high leaps with the knees wide open would have been especially dangerous.²⁷ The performance of the dance is thus a reminder of the

²² Anon., *A Treatise of Daunces*...., (1581; fac. rpt. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1974; preface by Arthur Freeman.).

²³ *The Anatomie of Abuses*, Sig. M7^v.

²⁴ Jacques Revel, 'The Uses of Civility', Rogier Chartier (ed.), Arthur Goldhammer (trans), *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance* (Cambridge Mass., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard, 1989), 163-205, at 195. Revel describes the Court of Louis XIV.

marked differences between pregnancy and dancing, and between boys and women. The rituals of the dance are carried out as part of entertainments, both for the dancers and their audience. Giving birth is the punishment borne by women to atone for the sin of Eve and the potential dangers for mother and child mean that attending it should never be simply an entertainment. Dancing is performed in public, childbirth takes place outside the public gaze, especially that of men, with only the woman's chosen friends attending.

The contrast between dancing and childbirth is of especial significance to moral rules about control of the body and *More Dissemblers* stresses the link between gender and language. For a boy to dance well, there must be a degree of bodily flexibility and lack of restraint which still leaves him in control. Siquapace's words to Antonio: 'he makes curtsy like a chambermaid' (V.i.181) and those of Nicholas, his usher: 'What do you mean page? are you mad; did you ever see a boy begin a dance and make curtesy like a wench before?', indicate that there are correct bodily gestures for a boy to make that are inappropriate for a woman. Siquapace exhorts Antonio:

Open thy knees; wider, wider, wider, wider: did you ever see a boy dance clenched up? he needs a pick-lock: out upon thee for an arrant ass! an arrant ass!....his knees are soldered together, they're sewed together: canst not stride?...I shall never teach this boy without a screw....(V.i.190-203)

Early modern medical discourse stressed that a woman is controlled by the pains of labour and Antonio's inability to perform the dance is a reminder of her earlier lack of control over her sexuality. Antonio, and the audience, are thus reminded that Antonio would not be in this predicament if she had kept her knees locked up on previous occasions. There are also reminders that dancing is a performance, different from theatre, yet one which can lead to similar problems.

In its representation of pregnancy, *More Dissemblers* is a reminder of *Measure for Measure*, in that pregnancy is a condition that follows sexual activity and which is judged by society, depending on the marital status of the woman concerned. Antonio's pregnancy reveals her past secret activity and she is represented

²⁵ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Micropaedia, Vol. 5, 91.

²⁶ See Mendelson and Crawford, 116, in relation to men's and women's roles in courtship, as discussed in Chapter Two.

²⁷ Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-birth*, 22. However, Nicholas, Siquapace's usher, implies that pregnant women often dance, although probably they are women whose pregnancies are illegitimate in some way. He comments as Antonio is taken away:

I fear me 'twill bring dancing out of request,
And hinder our profession for a time.
Your women that are closely got with child
Will put themselves clean out of exercise,
And will not venture now, for fear of meeting
Their shames in a coranto, 'specially
If they be near their time. Well, in my knowledge,
If that should happen, we are sure to lose
Many a good waiting-woman that's now o'er shoes.
Alas the while! (V.i.231-240)

'O'er shoes' may refer to the outline of a pregnant woman's belly but see V.i.239, fn 2, which explains 'o'er shoes' as 'a sort of proverbial expression', implying someone is in deep trouble: 'I never would have gone so far o'er shoes to pluck you out of the mire'. There is no reason why it need not have both meanings, given the problems for a pregnant single woman.

throughout as miserable and ashamed. Pregnancy and childbirth, as represented in the play, are painful and demeaning. Antonio is not to be put to death as Juliet is but, as Michael Shapiro notes, if she had been brought before the London magistrates, bearing a bastard and wearing male apparel, this would have constituted evidence of her moral depravity.²⁸ In the play, Antonio is saved by marrying Lactantio. Marriage to Antonio is punishment for Lactantio and the implication is that she, also, will be unhappy.

Right up to Antonio's fall during the dancing lesson, despite the focus on Antonio's pregnant body, boys and women appear as totally different beings, although also very similar in their vulnerability. Genital differences which should be obvious through Antonio's pregnancy are ignored and are certainly less important than gender when other characters interpret what they see and hear in the page. The fact that Antonio can pass so successfully as a boy even while pregnant and with so much about her that is soft and feminine indicates how strongly the other characters in the play rely on gender to make judgements about sexual difference. If someone presents as a boy in boy's clothes, even when those clothes are likely to reveal a pregnancy, the society depicted in *More Dissemblers* accepts that person as a boy. While the play confirms the prevalence of gender over sex in early modern society, it does not challenge gender roles. Rather it upholds them. It attacks exploitation of women by men through depicting Lactantio as callous, lustful and most concerned about money. But it also represents women as largely the victims of their own misfortunes and is, to that extent, misogynistic. There are two characters who exhibit signs of homoerotic attraction to Antonio and neither of them is treated sympathetically. The Cardinal is sexually inexperienced and naïve, a man who thinks he has not experienced sexual attraction before and possibly does not identify it when he does. No matter how benign his intentions, he makes decisions about Antonio without bothering to ask the page if he wants to move to the household of the Duchess. When Antonio says she does not wish to do so, he simply states: 'thou know'st not thine own happiness, through fondness,/ And therefore must be learnt: go, dry thine eyes' (III.i.144-145). Further, he is acting virtually as a pander for Lactantio in attempting to persuade the Duchess to change her mind about remarriage and the change in heart appears to have arisen when he knew his nephew was involved.²⁹ Dondolo preys on Antonio, thinking that he is a vulnerable young boy, resents the fact that she holds herself aloof from him and boasts about earlier occasions when he has been successful with young male servants. Shapiro regards Dondolo's 'crude homoeroticism' as illuminating 'what was widely perceived as the common treatment of apprentices in all-male theatrical troupes' (57).

In *Sodometries*, Jonathan Goldberg examines the tendency of many critics to assume that 'the constructedness of gender reflects on relations only between men and women' and warns of the dangers of assessing early modern drama from an assumption of heterosexism as the norm (107).³⁰ I do not think it is a denial of the

²⁸ Shapiro includes some Legal Records of Cross-Dressing in Appendix C (225-234). No. 10, Margaret Wakeley had a bastard and wore men's clothes: 'Punished and delivered' (233).

²⁹ Shapiro describes the Cardinal's 'dexterous casuistry' (60) and the 'avarice, faithlessness and hypocrisy of Lactantio and the Cardinal' (60).

³⁰ Goldberg criticises Jean Howard's arguments, in 'Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Social Struggle', because, he argues, she reads 'Renaissance drama within the matrix of a compulsory and only minimally negotiable heterosexuality' (108). Orgel and Levine 'are far more alert to alternative sexual

Footnote(s) continue on following page(s)

possibility of homoerotic desire, or even of relationships which would today be categorised as homosexual, to assess *More Dissemblers* as critical of the homoerotic desire felt by the male characters for Antonio. She is exploited by the man who knows she is a woman. Dondolo, who thinks she is a boy, would exploit her if he could. In the event, a heterosexual coupling has led to her downfall and she avoids the advances of Dondolo. In my view both men are equally exploitative and both receive the same mixture of censure and humorous acceptance that is evident about moral lapses in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. However, what *More Dissemblers* suggests is that physical desire, whether for someone of the same sex or a different sex, is itself a matter of construction. Even if desire is experienced physically, it is as much a matter of gender as it is of sex. Dondolo understands the nature of his desire but has mistaken the sex of its object. He can be compared to the Cardinal whose understanding is more confused and who does not realise that Antonio is a woman, nor understand, apparently, what might be involved in his wish to protect the pretty young boy. Lactantio, the man who has impregnated Antonio, understood the nature of his desire and the sex of the object of his desire, although he apparently did not expect her to conceive a child. All the men who relate to Antonio are thus lacking in some aspect of sexual knowledge but the Cardinal and Dondolo appear as especially foolish and naïve and, to that extent, *More Dissemblers* is unsympathetic to homoerotic desire.

Before looking at what Siquapace says about Antonio, I will discuss further the understanding of sexual difference prevalent when the play was first performed..

'If men breed women can get'

As noted in the Introduction, many scholars interpret sexual difference in early modern drama, especially plays with transvestite heroines, by referring to a homologous 'one-sex model' in which the outward genitals of men are inverted in women but otherwise the same. Laqueur believed the implications of homology to be so extreme that we have to imagine the reverse of twentieth century conceptions of 'sex' and 'gender'. He argued:

...in these pre-Enlightenment texts, and even some later ones, sex, or the body, must be understood as the epi-phenomen, while *gender*, what we would take to be a cultural category, was primary or 'real'. Gender—man and woman—mattered a great deal and was part of the order of things; sex was conventional, though modern terminology makes such a reordering nonsensical. At the very least, what we call sex and gender were in the 'one-sex model' explicitly bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substrate...was impossible.³¹

Many early modern medical authorities state that women have the same parts of generation as men although, in Helkiah Crooke's words: 'in these [men] they appear outward at the *Perinaeum*...in those [women] they are for want of heate retained

possibilities' but they, also, are 'haunted by similarly normative views of (hetero)sexuality' (108). Orgel's claim, that men are superior women, and Levine's, that men are failed women, are both misogynistic. Jardine, in explaining the constructedness of femininity, also pursues her point through a homophobic argument (113).

³¹ *Making Sex*, 8.

within'.³² He regards it as eminently reasonable that both sexes should have the same parts:

... for seeing a woman is begotten of a man, and perfect also in mankind (for Natures imperfections are not so ordinary) it is reasonable that the substance and the shape of the parts in both sexes should be alike; as coming from one and the same set as it were of causes, (216)

Crooke then elaborates on Galen's belief that the woman, like the man, has spermatical veins and arteries, and testicles; that the womb is like the scrotum 'as if the cod were but a womb turned the inside outward;....and the necke of the wombe (saith he) is in stead of the yard' (216). Both men and women contribute seed at conception:

...the wombe or Matrixe which receyueeth seede [from the woman's testicles] together with the mans, reteyneth it, and worketh vpon it for the generation and preseruatiō of mankind. (216)

Later in the work, Crooke rejects the homological thesis, at least in part. He assesses the opinions of various ancient scholars that men and women are so similar that a woman might become a man by her genitals descending (although not the reverse). But he argues, based on the evidence of dissection, and on reason (249), that women's genitals are not perfect inversions of male genitals. Men have more parts than women and they cannot be compared exactly: 'Howsoever...the neck of the womb shall be inverted, yet will it neuer make the virile member...' (250). Unlike the yard, 'the *Clitoris* is a small body, not continued at all with the bladder...' (250).

Crooke also finds that sex-change is doubtful:

But what shall we say to those so many stories of women changed into men? Truly, I thinke, saith he [Laurentius], all of them monstrous and some not credible. But if such a thing shal happen, it may well be answered that such parties were Hermaphrodites, that is, had the parts of both sexes....Or...there are some women so hot by nature that their *Clitoris* hangeth forth in the fashion of a mans member...Again Midwives may oft be deceived....(250)

In Crooke's analysis, then, a woman is unlikely to become a man but, if she does, he can explain the phenomenon in a way that denies homology. What has occurred is not a change of sex through the bringing to light of hidden but identical genitals. Instead, we imagine a hermaphroditic being with the different organs of a man and of a woman. Crooke's second explanation, that the clitoris in some women is greatly enlarged, also tends to deny homology. His tone combines elements of the salacious ('so hot by nature') and the anxious, with the hint that he is not concerned that women might actually turn into men. Rather, while remaining women, they might displace men in being able to give sexual pleasure to other women. His third proposition is that midwives do not assign the right sex to children at birth, again a proposal that there are two distinct sexes.

Crooke thus appears first to accept homology and then to deny it. Orgel explains these apparent ambiguities in Crooke's work as typical of the relative unimportance accorded to consistent argument by Renaissance thinkers (22). There is certainly

³² *Mikrokosmographia*, 216.

inconsistency between statements describing women's genitals as in substance and shape the same as man's, and pointing out the physical differences that make such a proposal ridiculous. But, where Orgel dismisses the inconsistency in Crooke's work as typical of early modern thought processes, I note some indications that Crooke was aware of the inconsistency and concerned about it. His work can be read as a struggle to base his opinions firmly in the theories of respected authorities and to confirm also what his own sense tells him. He has to explain how the priority given by humoral theory and homology to the superior heat and dryness of men is consistent with a reproductive system, perfectly designed by Nature, in which women are constantly described as cold and moist.

Crooke's plan for *Mikrokosmographia* is to discuss the relevant areas of the body in separate books and at the end of each book to include a separate part dealing with controversial issues. He divides his discussion between Book IV: 'Of the naturall Parts belonging to Generation'....; and Book V: 'Of the History of the Infant...'. In Book IV, Crooke explains in a Preface why he has found it necessary to describe the genitals and in a first Chapter to outline why humans need them: 'the generation of perfect creatures....For this purpose, Nature hath framed in both sexes parts and places fit for generation....' (200). Like many other early modern texts, *Mikrokosmographia* then describes men's genitals in detail, using them as the basis for the subsequent descriptions of the parts of women, although some authors indicate their awareness that this model appears to accord a superior position to men.³³ Crooke then discusses controversial questions such as: Question VIII: 'How the parts of generation in men and women doe differ', which he has foreshadowed earlier. When he first discusses Galen's theory of 'the proportion of parts in men and women (216-217), he points out that Fallopius 'frameth the comparison of parts somewhat after another sort, as we shall see hereafter when we come to the Controuersies' (216). In Book V, Crooke describes the principles of generation, seed and the mother's blood, conception, the nourishment of the child in the womb and childbirth. Some of the controversial issues he considers in Book V, are: Question I: 'Of the differences of the sexes'; Question II: 'Of the temperament of women, whether they are colder or hotter then men'; and Question V: 'Whether women do yeelde seeds'.

Book IV is more descriptive than Book V, which is directed to the use made of the genitals and the processes of conception. I suggest that the inconsistency lies between the concept of women and men as sharing equally in sexual pleasure because their body parts are virtually identical and the need for women to bear children which requires a different body from a man's. A similar tension appears in the work of some other early modern authorities, although they do not all deal with homology in the same manner. Jane Sharp repeats the theory: 'Galen saith that women have all the parts of generation that Men have, but Mens are outwardly, womens inwardly', but she also stresses the necessity of the female role in procreation: 'though some idle Coxcombs will needs undertake to shew how Children may be had without use of the woman'.³⁴ She subsequently denies any

³³ Nicholas Culpeper hopes 'good Women will pardon me for serving mine own Sex first', *Directory for Midwives*, 3.

³⁴ *The Midwives Book*, 40-41. See also, 'God made all things of nothing but man must have some matter to work on or he can produce nothing' (82-83). Sharp states that because 'it is commonly maintain'd that the Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine', she will deal with men first,

similarity between male and female genitals and specifically rejects the possibility of sex-change (81-82). *Aristotle's Master-Piece* does not discuss men's genitals in any detail, although it does use them as the basis for descriptions of women's genitals; the clitoris, for example, is 'like a Yard in Scituation (sic), Substance, Composition and Erection' (99).³⁵ In the course of a discussion about the mutation of sexes in the womb, it is argued that '...the Woman has in a manner the same *Members* with the man, tho' they appear not outwardly, but are inverted with the conveniency of Generation' (93). A different emphasis appears in Jacopo Berengario's *Mikrokosmographia*, translated into English in 1664.³⁶ Berengario gives credence to homology: the 'whole Matrix' (including testicles and seminary vessels) 'is like men's genitals but diminished, retained within for their want of heat' (195) but he does not speculate about the potential for sex-change. Other scholars start by describing men's genitals and use this as the basis for describing women's genitals but do not mention the theory of homology. In *The Manual of the Anatomy, or, Dissection of the Body of Man*, for example, Alexander Read states that the clitoris 'representeth the prick of a man, so it suffereth erection....It may be called a woman's prick. In some women it hath been as big as a mans'³⁷. Read does not suggest female genitals are inverted versions of the male, let alone speculate that a woman might turn into a man.

Despite their similarity to men, there is no doubt that the purpose of women is for procreation which requires that they have different bodies from men. Sir Thomas Browne states:

...therefore God said, It is not good that Man should be alone, let us make him an help meet for him, that is, an help unto generation; for as to any other help, it had been fitter to have made another man.³⁸

Browne argues that animal generation requires two sexes. Although Adam 'included all humane nature, or was (as some opinion) an Hermaphrodite', he could not regenerate himself, hence God's creation of Eve. It is impossible to tell the extent to which Browne's '...it had been fitter to have made another man' is a joke, but the idea, sourced in the Book of Genesis, that God created women for procreation, is common. Ambroise Paré's emphasis is slightly different but he, also, stresses the continuation of mankind as the reason for sex differences. He states that 'God distinguished mankind into a double sex, to wit of male and female' so they could

and 'treat last my own sex', 'that I may not forsake the ordinary method', suggesting that 'perhaps when men have need of us they will yield the priority to us' (4-5).

³⁵ The words: 'It is like the yard in scituation, substance, composition, and erection' appear in *The Compleat Midwife's Practice*, 61, an example of the complex interrelationships between early modern works dealing with anatomy and human reproduction.

³⁶ H. Jackson (trans.), *Mikrokosmographia, or, A description of the body of man* (London: 1664; fac. rpt. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1984, Early English Books 1641-1700, 1495: 15).

³⁷ *The Manual of the Anatomy, or, Dissection of the Body of Man* (London, 1642; fac. rpt. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms International, 1977, Early English Books, 1641-1700, 775:4), (121). Read was a 'Doctor of Physick, a Fellow of the Physicians College and a Brother of the Worshipfull Company of the Barber-Churgions'.

³⁸ *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, 134. In discussing the mutation of hares, Browne says: 'we cannot deny it in Hares, it being observable in Man' (226).

‘endure their species or kind by propagation or succession...;’...the male is such as engendereth in another, and the female in herself...’³⁹

Crooke, when talking about conception, insists on the need for two separate and distinct sexes. Sex differences were part of God’s plan to preserve humanity. In his ‘Of the Difference of the Sexes’, Crooke outlines Aristotle’s theory, that, for procreation, it was necessary ‘that there should be a double creature, one which should beget in another, and another that should generate in it self’ (271). He also explains that, for successful procreation, the womb must be inside the woman, so that the woman’s inadequate heat and excess moisture are a benefit: ‘Nature therefore [ie “Almighty God”] made another sexe of mankind, not altogether of so hot a temper or constitution, because she should have a superfluity of bloode for the nourishment of the Infant’ (199). Crooke also notes that ‘the partes of generation for want of heate to thrust them foorth remaining within, might make a fit place wherein to conceive, breede and perfect the same’ (147).

Homology retains its hold in the reminder that: ‘...the parts of generation are so formed that there is not only a naturall instinct of copulation, but an appetite and earnest desire thereunto’ (147). Women’s bodies, therefore, are very like the bodies of men, especially in their capacity for sexual pleasure but they are also very different in their ability to protect and nourish a foetus. I suggest that, if there is a shift or change in human bodies which early modern people understood as likely to occur, it was not that a man might turn into a woman or even that a woman might turn into a man. Once conception occurred, the early modern mind was able to shift its focus so that the woman’s body which was very like a man’s could shift into a body which was totally different to a man’s, in all the ways that mattered to the growth of the child.

‘A midwife? by this light, the boy’s with child! A miracle! Some woman is the father’

I have argued that gender prevails over sex in *More Dissemblers*. Other characters do not see the pregnancy of a woman wearing revealing man’s clothes because boys do not get pregnant. This continues even when the boy makes gestures which are culturally coded for a woman, as Antonio does when he curtsies like a wench. Ultimately, however, sex is more powerful than gender. In a crisis, no matter what Antonio does, her pregnant body takes control. The overt message is that there are identifiable physical differences between men and women, based on their roles in procreation, which are ultimately more important than any outward trappings or assumed behaviour. It is Antonio’s physical attributes that force her to act in accordance with her ‘true’ sex, despite her attempts to present herself as a boy. Her womb insists on drawing attention to itself, pronouncing that, physically, boys and women have different bodies with different tasks to perform and that to mix them is unnatural. Antonio’s sex can thus be contrasted with the female/feminine gender role she failed to adopt and also with the almost male/masculine role she adopts as a page. Antonio’s problems are caused by her failure to live in accordance with the appropriate gender role for her sex. If sex and gender are allied as they should be, there is no problem.

³⁹ *Of the Generation of Man*, 885, 887.

Sinquapace is so obsessed with gender that he continues to see Antonio as a boy. This means some woman must be the father. A pregnant boy means the proper hierarchies of moral order and gender norms have been overturned: 'The world's turned upside down'; and men might lose their capacity to 'get' children and be reduced to the breeding role while women can turn into men. 'One could never do both yet' is a reminder of Crooke's anxiety about hermaphroditic women who might make men superfluous. But while he flirts with the idea of interchangeability, Sinquapace also asserts the need for difference: 'The boy's with child!, some woman is the father'; 'if men breed, women must get'. He asserts that, for human procreation, it is essential that there be two sexes. If there is to be a shift or change that Sinquapace can understand, it must be in procreative roles. There are two sexes, men and women. Men remain men and women remain women but they perform the functions currently understood to be those of the other sex.

For such a shift to be possible, men's and women's bodies would have to be sufficiently similar for each to adopt the procreative role of the other sex, so that what Sinquapace is putting forward is a modified version of homology. Further, if men have the internal womb necessary to 'breed' a child and women have the external organ to 'get' it, their 'sex' is separated from the genitalia that have hitherto been accepted as the physical differences constitutive of sex. For Sinquapace, Antonio's 'sex' is, as Laqueur says, a matter almost exclusively of gender. Sinquapace continues to believe in Antonio as a boy after evidence suggests that this is not the case, exemplifying the attitude summed up by Greenblatt that, for all its emphasis on indeterminacy, homology enabled a sense of sexual determinacy:

...because without it the traditional psychology and physiology of sex would be thrown into confusion. Hence even when the belief that the woman was a defective male was abandoned by most physicians and the form of female anatomy was attributed to function rather than inadequate heat, the notion of an alignment between the sexes proved surprisingly durable. (83)

Of course, Sinquapace is shown by the action to be wrong. Antonio has her child and appears on stage as a gentlewoman. *More Dissemblers* thus offers a critique of homology and demonstrates the anomalies inherent in a body of knowledge that insists on structural identity and also on difference based on function. Paré describes the case of a young peasant woman called Marie whose male genitals 'came to be developed', after she jumped over a ditch. She changed her name to Germain.⁴⁰ Village girls sang a song in which they warned each other 'not to stretch their legs too wide for fear of becoming males like Marie Germain' (Greenblatt, 81). Antonio opens her legs too wide but instead of becoming a man, she becomes a mother.

The pregnant boy in *More Dissemblers Besides Women*

How far could any of these conclusions stand in early performances when Antonio was played by a boy? Whenever Antonio was on stage, by drawing attention to her pregnancy and her transvestite disguise, the play would have emphasised that the actor was a boy. The use of a boy to play such an ambiguous role, adds a layer of ambiguity to the theatrical effect so that almost every word would have been a

⁴⁰ Greenblatt, 73-81. See also Patricia Parker, 'Gender Ideology, Gender Change: The Case of Marie Germain', *Critical Inquiry* 19 (Winter 1999), 337-364.

'reference point', reminding the early modern audience that 'he' was present. The dance, with its erotic connotations, so denounced by the antitheatricalists, was danced differently by men and women and had different cultural connotations depending on the sex of the dancer, differences which could only have stressed the theatricality of a pregnant woman disguised as a boy and the fact that Antonio's disguise was more in keeping with the actor playing her than with her pregnant character. I have argued that the characters in the play who accept Antonio as a boy demonstrate a lack of understanding of their own sexual desires. The implication is that any person in the audience who does the same is equally lacking in sexual awareness. However, the presence of the boy actor would have vindicated them in accepting Antonio as a boy, thus further reinforcing that he was not a woman. One effect would have been to make Antonio's pregnancy less believable and her plight less monstrous in human terms but this would not necessarily have removed the taint which pregnancy acquired through being presented as such a miserable and demeaning condition.

Without the boy actor, *More Dissemblers* could have been read as a joke at the expense of critics of the theatre who argued that cross-dressed boys incited homoerotic lust because at the theatrical level, whatever Dondolo's desires and intentions, Antonio's plight is the result of heterosexual activity. Metatheatrically, however, the boy actor would have suggested that the antitheatricalists were correct because Antonio, played by a boy, is supposed to be pregnant to Lactantio, a man. The boy actor would also have supported antitheatrical condemnations of dancing, in that the dance, while performed only by boys, at the metatheatrical level, is not danced to praise God but as an encouragement to lust. Further, while the play appears to denigrate homoerotic desire as foolish and naïve, the focus on Antonio's body, especially comments like Dondolo's about his buttocks and jokes from Celia about his 'prick-song', seems designed to invite homoerotic interest in the boy actor and, perhaps, to offer encouragement to other actors or audience members about his availability. Dondolo's wish to 'truss' Antonio's hose, would have reminded the audience of the need for the boy actor's genitals to be trussed during a performance to make them less obvious, and also the implication that trussed genitals were inside the body. Antonio's outfit, with some prosthesis to denote pregnancy, would not have presented an enticing outline, but the boy's body would not have been obliterated.

The play could also have been read as making fun of supporters of the theatre like Thomas Heywood who denied that transvestite disguises on stage were an incitement to homoeroticism or deception.⁴¹ As noted in the Introduction, his answer to charges that theatre led to sodomy was simply to deny it. He argued that cross-dressing in the theatre differed from the real world, where it might be used to conceal young people from their fathers or tutors, whereas audiences in the theatre who watch a boy playing a woman on stage always know that she is a boy. In *More Dissemblers*, transvestite disguise allows Antonio to be taken for a boy. Dondolo is inspired with homoerotic lust for her. And while Aurelia's father is not taken in by her man's disguise, he does accept her as a gypsy. Far from the audience simply accepting that Antonio was played by a boy, the comedy of *More Dissemblers* depended on that fact.

⁴¹ *An Apology For Actors*, Sig. C3^v.

The ambiguity of Antonio's shifting figure as a boy/ woman culminates in her giving birth during the dancing lesson. I have argued that, during the dancing lesson, the physical body of Antonio, the woman character, assumes priority over gender assumptions that have blinded other characters to her sex. It is very unlikely that an actor could have used his body to portray the labour pains Antonio cannot control and, simultaneously, block his body out completely from audience attention. No doubt, an audience that found *More Dissemblers* comic would enjoy the tension between the character's body and that of the boy actor, whose ability to manoeuvre between the world of the play and that of the playhouse, is described by Shapiro as '*theatrical vibrancy*' (52). The birth of Antonio's baby, at a time when she most wishes to be taken for a boy, appears to confirm that there are two sexes and that physical differences are ultimately more important than gender-based cultural assumptions. When Antonio was played by a boy, the message would have been that there is only one sex and that the difference between men and women was a matter of gender as Laqueur has argued. The boy actor, whose presence makes it impossible to accept fully the implications of the text would have thus turned the world of the play upside down.

Coming from the mouth of a character on the early modern stage, Sinquapace's words about interchangeability take on a different dimension. 'One never could do both yet' could have been read as a witty denial of the early modern theatrical practice of an all male-stage. But it would simultaneously have been directly contradicted by the reality of that practice. The boy, the woman and the page are all one boy who 'does both' on stage, that is, he plays women and he plays boy pages. 'If men breed, women must get' is similarly slanted because, on an all-male stage, if a boy is pregnant, any woman who came along to take the breeding role would also be a boy. Sinquapace's words could also be taken to mean that if women engage in public performances such as dancing, instead of staying home and performing pregnancy, they may take over the task of men as actors in theatrical performances, reducing men to the lesser role of bearing children.

The text of *More Dissemblers* thus appears at first to demonstrate the homological thesis, and then to deny it, in line with the medical texts which stress the similarity between men's and women's bodies until it is accepted that the woman is pregnant, when her difference from a man becomes paramount. The early modern metatheatrical experience undid that denial. When a woman is played by a boy, *More Dissemblers* suggests, the difference between a man and woman, even a pregnant woman, is a matter of cultural construction.

Conclusion

Pregnancy in the early modern period was a more dangerous condition than we consider it to be today. Families held fears for the safety of the child and, whether or not the statistics justified their fears, mothers feared their own deaths at every birth. In early modern medical texts and pregnancy manuals, sexual difference was explained in terms that described the qualities that made women suited to childbearing, in particular the internal womb, as due to inferior qualities of moisture and coldness. Pregnancy appeared as an ambiguous condition, taking place out of sight inside women's bodies and made visible only through confusing signs. Pregnant women were presented as unstable, subject to unnatural cravings and in need of control. Many of the texts refer to conception in terms of the mutual pleasure of both parties. But there is a subtext which hints at pregnancy as the outcome of a physical process which is inherently disgusting, as evidenced, for example, in the justification for sexual pleasure given by Ambroise Paré in *Of the Generation of Man*. In explaining birth defects, the authorities describe what they regard as monstrous practices, such as intercourse during menstruation, the wandering mind of a woman during intercourse or genital self-manipulation by a lascivious woman.

These fears were linked to culturally-based anxieties which extended well beyond any medical concerns. Uncertainties associated with diagnosis could carry through into uncertainties about the circumstances of conception. In laws about marriage, in social expectations about courtship, in religious tracts and in manuals about domestic management, childbirth and family life, there was ample scope to find doubt about a pregnancy, with associated fears about marital fidelity, succession to a throne or rights to inheritance.

These culturally-based anxieties appear in the drama. In the discussion that follows, I will adopt the practice I have employed when discussing the plays separately, so that I analyse first the way in which 'the performance of pregnancy' is represented in the text and wait till later to consider how any conclusions would have been affected in early seventeenth century performances by the boy actors playing the pregnant character. Pregnancy during this period was not an unusual subject for playwrights, who treat it seriously and also as a subject for comedy, but always as a source of dramatic interest. Although there are references to pregnancy in early modern drama which cast it as benign, in the plays I discuss, with pregnant characters, pregnancy is always a source of tension or disruption. Pregnancy is linked to unauthorised sexuality, even if this is wrongly alleged. The pregnant woman is single or has not been married according to appropriate rituals. The marriage has been consummated in an unusual manner. Conception is the result of an adulterous liaison or, alternatively, this is suspected. Even that most chaste pregnant character, Hermione, in *The Winter's Tale*, is accused of adultery. Leontes repents his accusations and is shown to have acted unjustly in accusing Hermione of adultery, but despite the narrative developments, in which divine intervention reduces the need for evidence, the image of physical pregnancy presented is one of tension and anxiety.

Pregnant women in the drama are presented as volatile, which exposes them to moral or physical danger, and the drama thus represents pregnancy as a condition requiring control. In city comedies, such as *Bartholomew Fair* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, pregnancy is associated with bawdiness, uncontrolled appetites for food and drink, loss of control over bodily functions, such as urination, instability of

movement, and extreme wordiness. Win Littlewit pretends an insatiable pregnant craving for roast pork, as a device to attend the puppet show to be presented by her husband, and is then obliged to use the chamber pot at the booth of Ursula, the pig woman, where attempts are made to recruit her as a prostitute. In *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, the rituals surrounding childbirth are corrupted when the christening of the child of Mistress Allwit (supposed to be the child of her protector but possibly her husband's child) becomes a scene of drunkenness and incontinence, and other pregnancies are achieved through trickery and involve illicit sexuality. These 'comic' aspects of the pregnant woman's loss of control are not confined to comedies. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, a play which ends in tragedy, the Duchess's gorging on 'apricocks' represents one aspect of her instability.

Mistress Allwit's child is delivered by a midwife and she lies in with all the performance expected of an early modern woman although, as I have argued, the process mocks the concept of a calm, ordered place in which the woman could be kept safe during labour, birth and the recovery period. None of the other deliveries is routine. Juliet and Hermione give birth in prison, adding ironic meaning to the concept of 'confinement'. The Duchess gives birth prematurely, without proper preparation, and her recovery period is disrupted by the need to deceive Bosola. Antonio's labour starts with humiliation and degradation. Midwives do not play an important role but there are hints of both the professional licensed midwife in *A Chaste Maid* and the old crone in *The Duchess of Malfi*, with a combination of both in *The Winter's Tale*, because Leontes refers to Paulina as 'a mankind witch' and also as 'Lady Margery your midwife', linking midwives with disorderly women and with old hags.

Early seventeenth century theatre was a commercial venture, relying for its success on presenting audiences with plays that were dramatically exciting or funny. It is not surprising that there are no plays where nothing happens to happily married pregnant women. I suggest, however, that the negative view of pregnancy I have identified in the drama would have been likely to reinforce early modern uncertainty about the condition, even among people whose own experience was uneventful, and also to reinforce moral precepts by providing negative images about what was in store for women whose pregnancy could not bear public scrutiny.

Taken as a whole, the plays I have discussed display an ambivalence towards the signs of pregnancy which matches the uncertainties about diagnosis represented in the opinions of the medical authorities. Some plays indicate that a woman's condition will be visually obvious, as in *Measure for Measure*, *The Winter's Tale* and *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, where there are references in the text to the physical rounding or swelling of the woman's belly. In *The Duchess of Malfi* and *More Dissemblers*, the woman's appearance is ambiguous. The Duchess's fashionable clothes conceal her condition as, in a slightly different sense, does Antonio's page's outfit. Bosola suspects the Duchess but is uncertain. In *More Dissemblers*, a baby starts to emerge from Antonio's pregnant body as the first sign, for all the other characters except the father, that she is pregnant. The evidence of typical pregnant behaviour comes very close to confirming the Duchess as pregnant in Bosola's mind and the behaviour undoes her by precipitating her labour. Antonio, whose behaviour is inappropriate to her condition, also goes into labour in public, with the effect of revealing the pregnancy. On the other hand, the pregnancy of Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*, and Win Littlewit's pregnancy in *Bartholomew Fair*, may be dramatically 'false'. Helena is presented by Diana as embodying the answer to

Diana's riddle but, as I have argued, what Helena's body reveals is unclear. In Shakespeare's source, twin children are born to, and exhibited by, Giletta. Helena can only claim a birth yet to come and we only have her word that the pregnancy exists. And as I have argued, it is impossible to determine whether Win Littlewit is genuinely pregnant and acting a pregnant longing or deceitfully suggesting that she is pregnant by acting out a pregnant longing.

There are also important differences between the plays about what pregnancy signifies. All of them demonstrate that pregnancy never signifies only itself. A powerful image of pregnancy in *Measure for Measure* is that it signifies 'sin', which comes out on the woman's body to betray conduct carried on in private. I have also argued that Juliet's pregnancy is morally and legally ambiguous due to uncertainties during a transitional period from private marriage contracts to publicly sanctified marriages in church and that the play demonstrates the injustice of taking legal action against people based on marital status when that status is legally and religiously difficult to establish. In *All's Well*, Helena claims that her apparently pregnant body is a sign that her marriage has been consummated, signifying a new life for her and Bertram, but if her pregnancy is judged by reference to early modern expectations about false conception and monstrous births, the end of the play is even more provisional than scholars have so far identified. There is also the possibility that Helena's pregnancy may be solely a matter of acting, adding yet another layer of provisionality to the end of the play.

In *The Winter's Tale*, the significance of Hermione's pregnancy is subject to a reversal because of a sudden fit of jealousy on the part of Leontes. From signifying his secure succession, it turns into an apparent sign, in his mind, of her adultery. As I have argued, while Hermione's sexual honesty is vindicated in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes, in attacking Hermione, and members of his court who defend her, make similarly misogynistic universalising comments about the sexual dishonesty of women, and the message of the play, as it relates to ordinary women, is that truth in relation to early modern pregnancy could always be doubted and could never be proved. All human generation in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* is equivalent to commercial production. Mistress Allwit's pregnancy is apparently a sign that her husband is a cuckold, a situation he enjoys for the financial benefits involved. It is a sign which may itself be ambiguous in that her child may actually be her husband's.

In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the uncontrolled behaviour associated with pregnant women is the catalyst to reveal sexual activity the couple wished to keep a secret, a sign to her family that they do not maintain the control over the Duchess that they intended. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Win's 'pregnancy' is of interest for the way it may precipitate her into prostitution and as another theatrical event of which her husband is the author but over which he has no effective control. In *More Dissemblers*, pregnancy again reveals secret sexual activity to the humiliation of the woman concerned. The pregnancy operates theatrically as a comment on the way in which women's lives are culturally constructed as quite different to men's lives, because of different roles for men and women in procreation. The discovery of Antonio's sexual activity coincides with the discovery of her true sex. The implication is that while gender operates so strongly that sex can be concealed even during pregnancy, childbirth will eventually reveal the truth. *More Dissemblers* thus signifies the strength of sexual differences based in biology, rather than in cultural expectations.

The plays were first performed over a period of less than twenty-five years in the beginning of the seventeenth century. The last play, *More Dissemblers*, treats pregnancy as a sign of prior sexual activity and is, in that respect, similar to the first play, *Measure for Measure*, in delivering the message that pregnancy will reveal illicit sexual activity despite efforts to conceal it. In other respects the two plays are very different. *Measure for Measure* was classed as a comedy, but there is dramatic tension associated with Juliet's pregnancy, although it is the father who is expected to bear the most severe penalty, contrary to early modern English practice. In *More Dissemblers*, described as a tragi-comedy, no legal penalty is contemplated when an illicit pregnancy is revealed, as it is in *Measure for Measure*, but the play emphasises the social stigma attached to illegitimate pregnancy and the grotesque circumstances of Antonio's labour are treated as the occasion for ribald comedy. *Measure for Measure* treats Juliet's situation as much less distressing than Claudio's, but the play conveys a strong impression of her as a woman whose life is potentially ruined. The same is implied about Antonio, but because she is accorded no dignity, it is harder to treat what happens to her seriously.

I suggest that the difference in dramatic effect between *Measure for Measure* and *More Dissemblers* is attributable to more than a difference in genre and that, over the period of twenty years or so between them, playwrights had become increasingly aware of the metatheatrical implications of pregnancy, although the development was erratic and complicated. The metatheatricality of representing pregnancy in the drama was clearly understood from the outset. Both *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* depict dramatic situations in which a woman's pregnancy is 'acted' within the play, in a totally theatrical manner, to achieve some goal, although the goals are very different and the pregnancy in *All's Well* may not even be genuine. Both plays include indications of their status as theatre and *Measure for Measure* also establishes a correspondence between theatre and brothels, which invokes the attacks of the antitheatricalists.

For all their metatheatricality, however, neither *Measure for Measure* nor *All's Well* can be said to be plays 'about' theatre. And, although in *All's Well* there may not be a pregnancy, both plays are more concerned with actual rather than metaphorical pregnancy although, paradoxically, in neither of these plays is there much interest in the physical minutiae of pregnancy, except for Mistress Elbow's longing for 'stewed prunes', which is described, not depicted. After *All's Well*, in my view, the plays have increasingly less to do with human generation and show an increasing interest in what pregnancy signifies in relation to theatre. This development is complicated by the fact that there is also an increasing attention to the physical aspects of pregnancy, through references to 'the Pica' or aspects of supposedly typical 'pregnant behaviour'.

In *The Winter's Tale*, there is some emphasis on Hermione's physical appearance of pregnancy and, when her child is born, her stage pregnancy is given dramatic validity. The 'pregnant' behaviour of Leontes can be compared to 'the mother', and this reference also provides a possible explanation for Hermione's appearance of death, suggesting that her body is a woman's body. Despite the drama involved in, and resulting from, Hermione's pregnancy, the focus is much more on theatre than on pregnancy. The play shows, in the statue scene, how an ideal stage performance will involve a coming together of the audience and the theatrical company to create truth. There are implications, through Paulina's theatrical presentation in the statue scene,

that women can make a contribution to theatrical performances, other than as members of the audience or silent performers in court masques.

In *A Chaste Maid*, there is again an emphasis on the physical aspects of pregnancy, especially through references to Mistress Allwit's body shape and her longings. The presence of children, whether desired or not, adds dramatic validity to the pregnancies, although this is less effective than in *The Winter's Tale* because one of the children is treated like a lump of meat. Despite the emphasis on the physical, pregnancy is more important in the play as a metaphor for commercial production and thus for theatre. The result is that implications in earlier plays about women as the property of men, through comparisons between a pregnant woman's body as a vessel, fishpond or building, take over. Mistress Allwit is a reclining shop and wombs can be compared to baskets. The effect is to distance pregnancy from the natural processes of generation.

I suggest that the process of distancing pregnancy from a woman's body is further developed in *The Duchess of Malfi*, despite the fact that the play is so intensely dramatic and the Duchess is such an extraordinarily powerful dramatic character. The play deals with the physical aspects of 'the Pica' and the Duchess gives birth to several children, one of whom is the result of the stage pregnancy the audience is invited by Bosola to observe. This son may succeed her as ruler in Malfi, a reminder that she gave birth to a 'true' child. Unlike any of the earlier plays, the audience is invited to speculate about what the Duchess bears in her womb, not simply as 'sin' or 'triumph' or 'true', but as a living creature that already exists independently. But the overall effect, as I have argued, is to suggest comparisons between her womb and her chamber, and her womb and a theatre, once again distancing her stage pregnancy from a physical body.

Bartholomew Fair is similar to *A Chaste Maid* in its linking of physical procreation, commercial activity and theatre. Dolls, called babies, are sold as produce, linking prostitution and human procreation. Gingerbread 'babies' are carried round in a basket. But *Bartholomew Fair* might also be thought to be a response to *The Duchess of Malfi*, unlikely though that may seem. Pregnancy in both plays is identified as requiring control but those who seek to do so are unsuccessful. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the brothers of the Duchess seek unsuccessfully to control her sexuality and marital status, whereas the fair, standing both for pregnancy and theatre, is the elusive subject of attempted control in *Bartholomew Fair*. The claustrophobia and confinement of *The Duchess of Malfi* is, in *Bartholomew Fair*, replaced by a looking outward to the fair but both are places of excess, ambiguity and confusion, disorderly lust and madness. In *Bartholomew Fair* also, Win's pregnancy remains problematic and pregnancy relates more closely to theatre and the implications of performance for the generation of meaning.

In *More Dissemblers*, physical aspects of pregnancy appear in the physical discomfort of Antonio's pregnancy and the reminders of the limits placed by pregnancy on a woman's body. Antonio also bears a child. While the play is more concerned with Antonio as a pregnant body, as opposed to a building or theatre, the emphasis on performance means that the pregnancy itself is less important than the play's comment on the theatrical construction of gender: the main interest in the play is the differences in the social lives of early modern men and women based on differences in their procreative roles.

In every case, the meaning and significance I have identified for pregnancy would have been affected in performances where the pregnant women were played by boys. I have identified, in all the plays I discuss, moments on stage where the language and action place an emphasis on observing the physical body of the 'pregnant' character and, by doing so, would have invited attention to the boy actor's body, in a way that I believe would have been difficult to ignore. Overall, the effect of the boy actor would have been to emphasise the acted quality of pregnancy on stage but the results of this increased awareness would have differed from play to play. I suggested, in the Introduction, that the pregnant boy would have required the audience to speculate about the sexual activity that had led to conception, with a possible implication that the act leading to conception was impossible for a boy, because he lacked a womb. Further, conception required penetration of a woman through a bodily threshold, between the anus and urethra, that a boy did not have. Thus, if the early modern audience was made aware of the boy actor, for example through specific attention to the body of the pregnant woman character, there was scope for a tension between the actor and the character of a different kind to that identified where the woman character was not pregnant. One potential implication was that any children born to pregnant boys, not being the product of heterosexual intercourse, would be monstrous. Several children, born of stage pregnancies, demonstrate that the drama is likely to have overridden this potential metatheatrical implication of a pregnant boy. For example, the son of Antonio and the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi*, and Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*, are not monstrous, even though *The Winter's Tale*, through the 'pregnancy' of Leontes, gives a reminder that early modern pregnancy could result in a monstrosity.

In each play the acting of pregnancy by a boy would have affected the manner in which pregnancy was presented in the play and affected the implications about pregnancy that are disclosed in the text. In *Measure for Measure*, the emphasis on Juliet's pregnancy as 'sin' would have been enhanced by the fact that she was played by a boy, with a suggestion that the child she would bear might be monstrous. I have also argued that *Measure for Measure* demonstrates the impossibility of making judgements about marital status and sexual behaviour. The boy actor would have added a sense of indeterminacy about sex itself. Conversely, in *All's Well*, when Helena was played by a boy, it would have appeared more likely that she was not pregnant with a child which could be born alive, so that the pregnant boy reduced the range of provisional outcomes.

In *The Winter's Tale*, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *Bartholomew Fair*, the fact that a boy was playing a pregnant woman would have strengthened the shift I have mentioned, from pregnancy as representative of an interest in human generation to pregnancy as a metaphor for theatre. But the plays all deliver slightly different messages about the theatrical experience and the significance of the boy would have varied between the plays. In *The Winter's Tale*, the boy actor playing Hermione's pregnancy would have drawn attention to the theatrical performance involved in the 'pregnancy' of Leontes and thus to the different theatrical 'pregnancy' in the statue scene. While the play thus appears to send a positive message about the representation of women by boys, the boy actor playing Paulina would have counterbalanced any suggestion of a more active role for women in theatre implied in the statue scene.

When all the women in *A Chaste Maid* were played by boys, the message that every person and object on stage should be judged solely for its commercial value, rather

than any intrinsic worth, would have been strengthened. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, the madness and lack of control that increasingly develops throughout the play is first associated with the Duchess's pregnancy, performed by a boy actor. The ambivalence of *Bartholomew Fair* towards theatre as a 'vapour' put on to confuse and distract the audience would have been greatly increased when it was accepted that the 'pregnant' woman was also a boy. In *More Dissemblers*, the apparent triumph of sex over gender, which occurs when Antonio's child insists on being born, would have been undone when the audience was reminded that Antonio, the woman disguised as a boy was also played by a boy. I have thus argued in this thesis that the practice of using boy actors to perform the roles of pregnant women had significance for the representation of pregnancy on the early modern stage, even in roles such as the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi*, or Hermione, in *The Winter's Tale*. I thus disagree with almost all the scholars who have written about boy actors in women's roles. Kathleen McLuskie, for example, identified the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi* (and Ursula in *Bartholomew Fair*), as roles which would lose their dramatic effectiveness if the audience was reminded that the roles were played by boys. But she doubted the relevance of the boy actor except in a few cases. Many other scholars who accept the importance of boy actors, state that their views do not apply to tragedy, or imply this by limiting their discussion to the comedies with cross-dressed heroines.

I state that my thesis is original in combining the study of pregnancy in the texts with the study of performance by boy actors. I argue that this combined approach allows a more complex understanding of the early modern drama than is possible when the two are discussed separately. Scholars of the early modern drama have displayed a lack of interest in writing about the performance of pregnancy, as an acted phenomenon, or about pregnancy as performed by boys. There is excellent work on women's bodies in the drama but very little analysis of the performance of pregnancy. Most feminist examination of pregnancy in the drama in terms of early modern culture, fails to analyse how the figure of the pregnant character on stage would have been assessed as a genuine or false pregnancy, at the physical level, as I have done with Helena and Win Littlewit. My analysis of pregnancy thus avoids the assumption that pregnancy is always a sign for future renewal and growth.

Scholars who have written about boy actors have relied on the homologous early modern 'one-sex' model of sexual difference, in which women's genitals are men's genitals retained within their bodies, and have argued that this model serves to explain the tension between the indeterminate and the determinate that occurs in the drama where heroines, played by boys, are disguised as boys. My analysis of the medical literature identifies the confusion and inconsistency about the extent to which homology was a viable theory, which scholars such as Stephen Orgel have discussed. But I see much more concern than Orgel is prepared to accept, in the writing of Helkiah Crooke, about the clash between homology and humoral theory. Not all early modern authorities displayed the same level of interest in homology or the possibility of sex-change as Crooke, although later, Jane Sharp would demonstrate similar inconsistencies to Crooke. Sharp was fuelled partly by her recognition that women were represented in the medical literature as inferior beings, a situation she then helped to perpetuate.

The lack of scholarly interest in the acting of pregnancy by a boy, by those scholars who discuss boy actors, has led, in my view, to an overemphasis on the aspect of possible sex-change which homology implies. Gail Kern Paster identifies the clash

between homology and humoral theory but her focus is not usually on the drama as it is performed, and she is not interested in boy actors. The tension between sexual indeterminacy and determinacy which I find in the medical literature reduces when the emphasis shifts to the need for a woman to have a body with an internal womb, and a birth canal, if she is to successfully conceive and bear children. At that point, women's difference from men becomes paramount. Thus, for the early moderns, indeterminacy and determinacy met at the site of the pregnant woman's body and determinacy prevailed. In the theatre, the effect of the pregnant boy was to reinstate the sense of indeterminacy for the duration of the performance. The oscillation between the dramatic and the metatheatrical, while it obviously relied on the sexual indeterminacy of the boy actor playing a woman, also related to the woman character's pregnancy, with complex and varied implications in different plays.

The boy actors in pregnant roles made a powerful contribution to a sense of sexual indeterminacy on the stage. Dymphna Callaghan is concerned that some feminists have appeared to value destabilisation of meaning for its own sake without considering whether it offers any liberating possibilities for women. In my view, the performance of pregnancy by boys destabilised the meaning of pregnancy but the result was to close off possibilities for women that might otherwise have existed. I argue that stage pregnancy, acted by a boy, reinforced the negative aspects of pregnancy and the dramatic use of those aspects served to uphold orthodoxy. The debate about boy actors gained its initial impetus from Lisa Jardine's discussion of the misogyny of excluding women from the stage. Criticism of her work has dealt with her assessment of the homoerotic implications of the presence of the boy actors, rather than with the exclusion of women which, as Callaghan notes, has tended to be displaced. That *exclusion* of women from the stage is especially relevant to the stage representation of pregnancy by boy actors. In early performances of plays like *The Winter's Tale*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *More Dissemblers*, when women's roles were acted by boys, 'pregnancy' was articulated brilliantly as a series of performances. The full theatrical impact of such plays was only possible *because* the 'pregnancy' concerned was not acted by a woman. The effect, as I have argued, was a movement towards the use of 'pregnancy' as a metaphor for theatre, which, as I have interpreted it, involved a positive affirmation of the all-male stage. The pregnant boy thus reinforced the exclusion of women from taking an active role in the field of theatrical representation and their confinement to the childbearing role. Thus, through the indeterminacy of the pregnant boy, cultural determinacy prevailed.

Table of works cited

Plays¹

Jonson, Ben. *Bartholomew Fair*. Ed. and intro. Gordon Campbell. *Ben Jonson: The Alchemist and Other Plays*. Oxford. New York. Oxford University Press. 1995. Oxford World Classics series. 327-433.

Middleton, Thomas. *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*. Ed. and intro. Brian Loughrey and Neil Taylor. *Thomas Middleton: Five Plays*. London. New York. Penguin Books. 1988. 161-238.

More Dissemblers Besides Women. Ed. and intro. A. H. Bullen. *The Works of Thomas Middleton*. London. Humphrey Moseley. 1657. Rpt. New York. A. M. S. Press. 1964. Vol. VI. 376-481.

Shakespeare, William. *The Norton Shakespeare*. Eds. and intro. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E. Howard and Katharine Eisaman Maus. New York. W. W. Norton. 1997.

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi*. Ed. and intro. D. C. Gumby. *John Webster: Three Plays*. London. New York. Penguin Books. 1986. 167-292.

Primary Sources²

Anon. *A Treatise of Daunces*. 1581. Fac. rpt. Pref. Arthur Freeman. New York. London. Garland Publishing. 1974.

Anon. *Aristotle's Master-Piece or, The Secrets of Generation*. London. 1694. *Aristotle's Compleat Master Piece*. London. 1749. *Aristotle's Book of Problems*. London. 1776. *Aristotle's Last Legacy*. London. 1776. Fac. rpt. London. New York. Garland Publishing. 1986. Marriage. Sex and the Family in England, 1660-1800. Vol. 11.

Anon. *The Compleat Midwife's Practice Enlarged*. London. 1659. Second edition.

Berengario, Jacopo. H. Jackson, trans. *Mikrokosmographia, or, A description of the body of man*. London. 1664. Fac. rpt. Ann Arbor. Mich. University Microfilms International. 1984. Early English Books 1641-1700. 1495:15.

Browne, Sir Thomas. *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into very many Received Tenents and Commonly Presumed Truths*. London. 1646. Fac. rpt. Pref. Larry-Ted Pebworth. Menston, Eng. Scolar Press. 1972.

Cowley, Abraham. Dedicatory verse in *Poems By the Incomparable Mrs K. P.* London. 1664.

Crooke, Helkiah. *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man*. London. 1615. Fac. rpt. Ann Arbor. Mich. University Microfilms International. 1976. Early English Books 1475-1640. 1409:1.

¹ These are the editions quoted in the thesis. Other editions used are included under the playwright's name in Primary Sources, for seventeenth century texts and, for modern editions, under the name of the editor in Secondary Sources.

² This section includes primary sources quoted in the thesis, from the edition cited or from a facsimile reprint. It does not include works which are quoted, or to which reference is made, when the quotation has been taken from a secondary source. The sources from which any quotations of this kind were taken are identified in the relevant footnote. The work from which the quotation was taken, for example an anthology of early modern material about the family, or a discussion by another scholar, is included as a secondary source, in the following section.

- Culpeper, Nicholas. *A Directory for Midwives: or A Guide for Women. In their Conception. Bearing and Suckling their Children.* London. 1651.
- G. I. *A Refutation of the Apology for Actors.* London, 1615. Fac. rpt. Pref. Arthur Freeman. With Thomas Heywood, *An Apology For Actors.* New York. London. Garland Publishing, 1973. The English stage: attack and defense, 1577-1730 series.
- Gosson, Stephen. *The Schoole of Abuse.* London. 1579. Fac. rpt. Pref. Arthur Freeman. New York. London. Garland Publishing, 1973. The English stage: attack and defense, 1577-1730 series.
- An Apologie of the School of Abuse*, attached to *The Ephemerides of Phialo.* London. 1579. Fac. rpt. Pref. Arthur Freeman. New York. London. Garland Publishing Company. 1973. The English stage: attack and defense, 1577-1730 series.
- Playes Confuted in Five Actions.* Oxford, 1582. Fac. rpt. Intro. Peter Davidson. New York. London. Garland Publishing. 1974. Theatrum Redivivum series.
- Gouge, William. *Of Domesticall Duties.* London. 1622. Fac. rpt. Norwood, N. J. Walter J. Johnston. Amsterdam. Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. 1976. . Vol. 803.
- Guillemeau, Jacques. *Child-birth or. The Happy Deliverie of Women.* London. 1612. Fac. rpt. Amsterdam. Theatrus Orbis Terrarum. New York. Da Capo Press. 1972. English Experience. Vol. 464.
- Harvey, William. Trans. Gweneth Whitteridge. *De partu: Anatomical exercitations. Concerning the generation of living creatures. To which are added particular discourses of births, and of conceptions etc.* Oxford. Blackwell Scientific. 1981.
- Heywood, Thomas. *An Apology For Actors.* London. 1612. Fac. rpt. Pref Arthur Freeman. New York. London. Garland Publishing. 1973. The English stage: attack and defense, 1577-1730 series.
- Jorden, Edward. *A Brief Discovrse of A Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother.* London. 1603. Fac. rpt. Ed. and intro. Michael MacDonald. *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case.* London. New York. Routledge. 1991.
- Lodge, Thomas. 'Reply to Gosson'. Fac. rpt. with Henry Stalybridge. *The Epistle Exhortatory of an English Christian.* Intro. Peter Davidson. New York. London. Johnson Reprints. 1972. Theatrum redivivum.
- Mears, Martha. *The pupil of nature; or candid advice to the fair sex, on the subjects of pregnancy, childbirth.* London, 1797.
- Middleton, Thomas. *A Chast Mayd in Cheapeside.* London. 1630. Fac. rpt. Scolar Press. Menston, Eng. 1969.
- Munday, Anthony. Ed. J. H. P. Pafford. *Chruso-thriambos: The Triumph of Gold.* Private printing for the Goldsmith's Company. 1962.
- Paré, Ambroise. Trans. Thomas Johnston. *Workes. Book Twenty-Four. Of the Generation of Man.* London. 1634. Fac. rpt. Pound Ridge, N. Y. Milford House. 1968. 855-960
- Prynne, William. *Histriomastix: The Players Scovrge, or Actors Tragædie.* London. 1633. Fac. rpt. Pref. Arthur Freeman. New York. London. Garland Publishing. 1974. The English stage: attack and defense, 1577-1730 series.
- Rainolds, John and William Gager. *Th'overthrow of Stage-Playes, By the way of controversie betwixt D. Gager and D Rainoldes.* Oxford. 1599. Fac. rpt. Intro. J. W. Binns. New York. London. Garland Publishing. 1974. Theatrum redivivum.

Read, Alexander. *The Manual of the Anatomy, or, Dissection of the Body of Man*. London. 1642. Fac. rpt. Ann Arbor. Mich. University Microfilms International. 1977. Early English Books, 1641-1700. 775:4.

Shakespeare, William. *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies. Histories & Tragedies; A Facsimile of the First Folio*. London. 1623. Fac. rpt. Intro. Doug Moston. Routledge. New York. London. 1998.

Sharp, Jane. *The Midwives Book*. London. 1671. Fac. rpt. New York. London. Garland Publishing. 1985. Marriage Sex and the Family in England 1660-1800. Vol. 25.

Smith, Henrie. *A Preparative to Marriage*. London. 1591. Fac. rpt. Amsterdam. Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. Norwood, N. J. Walter J. Johnson. 1975. English Experience. Vol. 762.

Stubbes, Phillip. *The Anatomie of Abuses*. London. 1583. Fac. rpt. Amsterdam. Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. New York. Da Capo Press. 1972. English Experience. Vol. 489.

Swinburne, Henry. *A Treatise of Spousals or Matrimonial Contracts*. London. 1686. Fac. rpt. New York. London. Garland Publishing Company. 1985. Marriage Sex and the Family in England 1660-1800. Vol. 3.

Webster, John. *The Tragedy of the Dvchesse Of Malfy*. London. 1623. Fac. rpt. Menston. Eng. Scholar Press. 1968.

Wilkins, George. *The Miseries of Inforced Marriage*. London. 1607.

Williams, Dr John. *A Sermon of apparrell, preached before the Kings Maiestie and the Prince his Highnesse at Theobalds, the 22. of February, 1619*. London. 1620. Fac. rpt. Amsterdam. Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. Norwood, N. J. Walter J. Johnson. 1979. English Experience. Vol. 963.

Secondary Sources³

Adair, Richard. *Courtship, illegitimacy and marriage in early modern England*. Manchester. New York. Manchester University Press. 1996. Distributed in the United States and Canada by St Martin's Press.

Adams, Robert M. and George M. Logan. Eds. and intro. for The Early Seventeenth Century. *The Duchess of Malfi. The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. New York. London. W. W. Norton and Company. 1986. Fifth edition. Vol. I. 1240-1319.

Adelman, Janet. *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays: Hamlet to The Tempest*. New York. London. Routledge. 1992.

Agnew, Jean-Christophe. *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750*. Cambridge. New York. Cambridge University Press. 1986.

Ayto, John and John Simpson, *Oxford Dictionary of Modern Slang*. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1992.

Barish, Jonas. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley. Cal Los Angeles. London. University of California Press. 1981.

Barroll, Leeds. *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years*. Ithaca, N. Y. London. Cornell University Press. 1991.

³ This includes secondary sources quoted or cited in the thesis except where the source of the quotation or citation is the work of another scholar, in which case the source is identified in the relevant footnote.

- Bawcutt, N. W. Ed. and intro. *Measure for Measure*. Oxford. New York. Oxford University Press. 1991. Issued as a World's Classics paperback 1994. Reissued 1998.
- Belsey, Catherine. 'Disrupting sexual difference: meaning and gender in the comedies'. Ed. John Drakakis. *Alternative Shakespeares*. London. New York. Methuen. Vol 1. 1985. 166-190
- Bentley, G. E. *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time. 1590-1642*, Princeton, N. J. Princeton University Press. 1984.
- Boutilier, Alicia Ann. '*The Surer Side*': *Pregnancy in English Renaissance Drama and Society*. A thesis submitted for the award of the degree of Master of Arts. Dalhousie University. Halifax, Nova Scotia. 1992. Ann Arbor. Mich. University Microfilms International Dissertation Services. 1994
- Bradfield, Nancy. *Historical Costumes of England*. London. Harrap. Third edition. 1970. 83.
- Breier, René. '*Great-Bellied Women*': *The Pregnant Body and the Plays of Shakespeare*. A thesis submitted for the award of a degree of Doctor of Philosophy. University of California. Riverside. 1996. Ann Arbor. Mich. University Microfilms International Dissertation Services. 1997.
- Brennan, Elizabeth. Ed. and intro. John Webster. *The Duchess of Malfi*. London . A. C. Black. New York. W. W. Norton. Third edition. 1993, New Mermaids.
- Briggs, Robin. *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Content of European Witchcraft*. London. New York. Viking Penguin. 1966.
- Brissenden, Alan. Ed. and intro. Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, London. E. Benn, 1965.
- Brown, Carolyn E. 'Erotic Religious Flagellation and Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*'. *English Literary Renaissance*. 16. 1986. 139-165.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. New York. London. Routledge, 1993.
- Butler, Martin. Ed. and intro. *The Selected Plays of Ben Jonson*. Cambridge. New York. Cambridge University Press. 1989. Vol. II. 151-152.
- Callaghan, Dymrna. *Women and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy*. New York. London. Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1989.
- Shakespeare Without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*. London. New York. Routledge. 2000.
- Ed. and intro. *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. London. Macmillan. 2000. Distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press.
- Carlson, Eric Josef . *Marriage and the English Reformation*. Oxford. Cambridge. Mass. Blackwell. 1994.
- Chrisman, Kimberley. "'Unhoop the Fair Sex': The Campaign Against the Hoop Petticoat in Eighteenth-Century England". *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. 30:1 .1996. 5-23.
- Coghill, Neville. 'Six Points of Stage-Craft'. Ed. Kenneth Muir. *Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale, A Casebook*. London. Macmillan. 1968. 198-231.
- Cohen, Walter, 'Political Criticism of Shakespeare', *Shakespeare reproduced: The text in history and ideology*. New York. London. Methuen. 1987. 18-45.
- Collinson, Patrick. 'Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*: The Theatre constructs Puritanism'. Eds and intro. David L. Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington. *The*

Theatrical City: Culture Theatre, Politics in London, 1576-1649. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1995. 157-169.

Karin S. Coddon. 'The Duchess of Malfi: Tyranny and Spectacle in Jacobean Drama'. Ed. and intro. Dymphna Callaghan. *The Duchess of Malfi*. 25-45.

Crane, Mary Thomas. 'Male Pregnancy and Cognitive Permeability in *Measure for Measure*'. *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 49. 1998. 269-292.

Crawford, Patricia. *Women and religion in England, 1500-1720*. London. New York. Routledge. 1993. Christianity and Society in the Modern World series.

'Sexual Knowledge in England, 1500-1750'. Eds and intro. Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich. *Sexual Knowledge, Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality*. Cambridge. New York. Cambridge University Press. 1994. 82-106.

Cressy, David. *Birth. Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*. Oxford. New York. Oxford University Press. 1997.

Cunnington, C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington. *Handbook of English Costume in the Seventeenth Century*. London. Faber and Faber. Second edition. 1966.

Cunnington, Phillis. and Catherine Lucas. Illust. Barbara Phillipson and Phillis Cunnington. *Costume for Births, Marriages & Deaths*. London. Adam and Charles Black. 1972.

Dabhoiwala, Faramerz. 'The pattern of sexual immorality in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century London'. Eds. and intro. Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner. *Londinopolis: Essays in the cultural and social history of early modern London*. Manchester. New York. Manchester University Press. 2000. Distributed in the United States by St Martin's Press. 86-106.

Dessen, Alan C. and Leslie Thomson. *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1999.

Dollimore, Jonathan. 'Transgression and surveillance in *Measure for Measure*'. *Political Shakespeare*: Eds. and intro. Johnathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield. *Essays in cultural materialism*. Ithaca, N. Y. Cornell University Press. 1985. 72-87.

Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture. London. New York. Allen Lane. The Penguin Press. 1998.

Donaldson, Ian. *The World Upside-Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1970. 48-49.

Dusinberre, Juliet. *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*. London. Macmillan. 1975.

Eccles, Audrey. *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England*. Kent, Ohio. Kent State University Press. 1982

Enterline, Lynn. "'You speak a language that I understand not': The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter's Tale*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48:1, Spring, 1997, 17-44.

Erickson, Amy Louise. *Women and Property in early modern England*. London. New York.. Routledge. 1993.

Erickson, Peter. *Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama*. Berkeley. Cal London. University of California Press, 1985.

Rewriting Shakespeare, Rewriting Ourselves. Berkeley. Cal. Los Angeles. London. University of California Press. 1991.

- Evenden, Doreen. 'Mothers and their midwives in seventeenth-century London'. Ed. and intro. Hilary Marland. *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe*. London. New York.. Routledge. 1993. 9-26.
- Felperin, Howard. *The Uses of the Canon: Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1990.
- Finlay, Roger. *Population and Metropolis: The demography of London. 1580-1650*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1981.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse'. Ed. and intro. Elaine Showalter. *Speaking of Gender*. New York. London. Routledge. 1989. 73-100.
- Frost, David L. Ed. and intro. *The Selected Plays of Thomas Middleton*. Cambridge, London. New York.. Cambridge University Press. 1978.
- Goldberg, Jonathan. *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts: Modern Sexualities*. Stanford, Cal. Stanford University Press. 1992.
- Gowing, Laura. *Domestic Dangers: Women, Words, and Sex in Early Modern London*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1996.
- "The freedom of the streets": women and social space, 1560-1640'. Eds and intro. Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner. *Londinopolis: Essays in the cultural and social history of early modern London*. Manchester. New York. Manchester University Press. 2000. Distributed in the United States by St Martin's Press. 130-151.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. Berkeley. Cal University of California Press. 1988.
- Grieco, Sara F. Matthews . 'The Body, Appearance and Sexuality'. Eds. Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge. *A History of Women in the West*. Vol. III. *Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes*. Cambridge. Mass. London. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 1993. 46-84.
- Griffiths, Paul. 'Politics made visible: order, residence and uniformity in Cheapside, 1600-45'. Eds. and intro. Paul Griffiths and Mark S. R. Jenner . *Londinopolis: Essays in the cultural and social history of early modern London*. Manchester. New York. Manchester University Press. 2000. Distributed in the United States by St Martin's Press. 176-196.
- Gumby, D. C. Ed. and intro. *John Webster: Three Plays*. London. New York.. Penguin Books, 1986. First published in Penguin English Library. 1972. 167-292.
- Gurr, Andrew. *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. Second edition. 1996
- Hall, Jonathan. *Anxious Pleasures: Shakespearean Comedy and the Nation State*. Cranbury. N. J. London. Ontario. Associated University Presses. 1995. 127-148.
- Hamilton, Donna B. 'The Winter's Tale and the Language of Union, 1604-1610', *Shakespeare Studies*, XXI. 1993. 228-250.
- Haslem, Lori Schroeder. "'Troubled with the Mother'": Longings, Purgings, and the Maternal Body in *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Duchess of Malfi*'. *Modern Philology*. 92:4. May. 1995. 438-459
- Hearn, Karen. Ed. *Dynasties: Painting in Tudor and Jacobean England*. London. Tate Publishing. 1996.

Hodgdon, Barbara. 'The Making of Virgins and Mothers: Sexual Signs, Substitute Scenes and Doubled Presences in *All's Well That Ends Well*'. *Philological Quarterly*. 66. 1987. 47-71.

Holderness, Graham. 'The Winter's Tale: Country into Court', Eds. Graham Holderness, Nick Potter and John Turner. Intro. John Turner. *Shakespeare Out of Court: Dramatisations of Court Society*. London. Macmillan. 1990. 195-235.

Houlbrooke, Ralph. 'The decline of ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the Tudors'. Eds. Rosemary O'Day and Elizabeth Heal. *Continuity and change: personnel and administration of the church in England, 1500-1642*. Leicester. Leicester University Press. 1976. 239-257.

Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation. 1520-1570. Oxford. Oxford University Press. 1979.

English Family Life, 1576-1716: An Anthology from Diaries. Oxford. New York. Basil Blackwell. 1988.

Howard, Jean E. 'Cross-Dressing, the Theater, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England', Ed. and intro. Lesley Ferris. *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on cross-dressing*. London. New York. 1993. 20-48.

Huet, Marie Hélène. *Monstrous Imagination*. London. Cambridge. Mass Harvard University Press. 1993.

Hunter, G. K. Ed. and intro. William Shakespeare. *All's Well That Ends Well*. London. New York.. Methuen. 1959. Published as a University Paperback, 1967. Arden series.

Ingram, Martin. *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640*. Cambridge. New York. Cambridge University Press. 1987.

Jamieson, Michael. Ed. and intro. *Ben Jonson: Three Comedies*. Harmondsworth. UK. New York. Penguin Books. 1966.

Jankowski, Theodora A. *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama*. Urbana. Ill. Chicago. University of Illinois Press. 1992.

Jardine, Lisa. *Still Harping on Daughters. Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. Sussex. Harvester Press. 1983.

Reading Shakespeare Historically. London. New York.. Routledge, 1996.

Worldly Goods. A New History of the Renaissance. London. Macmillan. 1996.

Keeble, N. H. Ed. and intro. *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Women*. London. New York.. Routledge. 1994.

Kiernan, Pauline. *Shakespeare's Theory of Drama*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1998.

Klein, Joan Larson. Ed. and intro. *Daughters, Wives and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640*. Urbana Ill. Chicago. University of Illinois Press. 1992.

Lamb, Mary Ellen. 'Shakespeare's "Theatrics": Ambivalence toward Theater in *Measure for Measure*', *Shakespeare Studie*, XX. 1998. 129-146.

Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge. Mass. London. Harvard University Press. 1990. Published as a First Harvard University Press paperback, 1992.

Laron, Zvi. 'Puberty', *Encyclopaedia of Human Biology*. New York. London. Academic Press. 1991. Vol 6. 339-344.

- Laurence, Anne. *Women in England, 1500-1760: A Social History*. London. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 1994. Published in paperback by Phoenix/ Orion Books. 1996.
- Levine, Laura. *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminisation, 1574-1642*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1994.
- Lin, Shen. 'How Old Were The Children of Pauls'. *Theatre Notebook*. XLV:3. 1991. 121-131.
- Maclean, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Women: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1980.
- Marcus, Leah. 'Pastimes and the Purging of Theater: *Bartholomew Fair* (1614).' Eds and intro. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. New York. London. Routledge. 1991. 196-209.
- 'Of Mire and Authorship: Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*'. Eds and intro. David L Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington. *The Theatrical City: Culture Theatre, Politics in London, 1576-1649*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1995. 170-181.
- Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents*. Berkeley. Cal.
- Marland, Hilary. Introduction to *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe*. London. New York.. Routledge. 1993.
- Maus, Katharine Eisaman. *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. 1995.
- McElroy, John F. *Parody and Burlesque in the Tragicomedies of Thomas Middleton*. Salzburg. Instit für Englische Sprache und Literatur. 1972.
- McIntyre, Jean. *Costumes And Scripts in the Elizabethan Theatres*. Edmonton, Alberta. University of Alberta Press. 1992.
- McKenzie, Mary. "'Is she or isn't she?": *The Duchess of Malfi* and the late Diana, Princess of Wales'. Eds. Jacqueline Lo, Duncan Beard, Rachel Cunneen and Debjani Ganguly. Intro. Jacqueline Lo. *Impossible Selves: Cultural Readings of Identity*. Melbourne. Australian Scholarly Publishing. 1999. 146-156.
- McLuskie, Kathleen. 'The Act, the Role, and the Actor: Boy Actresses on the Elizabethan Stage'. *New Theatre Quarterly*. 3:10. May, 1987. 120-130
- Renaissance Dramatists*. Hemel Hempstead. Harvester Wheatsheaf. 1989.
- 'Drama and sexual politics; the Case of Webster's *Duchess*'. Ed and intro. Dymrna Callaghan. *The Duchess of Malfi, Contemporary Critical Essays*. London. Macmillan. 2000. Distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press. 104-121.
- Mendelson, Sara and Patricia Crawford. *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720*. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1998.
- Middelton, Thomas and Thomas Dekker. *The Roaring Girl*. London. A C Black. 1997. Second edition. New Mermaids series.
- Mullaney, Stephen *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*. Ann Arbor. Mich. University of Michigan Press. 1988.
- Neale, J. E.. *Queen Elizabeth I*. Harmondsworth. Penguin Books. 1960.
- Neely, Carol . *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays*. New Haven. London. Yale University Press. 1985.

'Constructing the Subject: Feminist Practice and the New Renaissance Discourses'. *English Literary Renaissance*. 18. 1988. 5-18.

Newman, Karen. *Fetal Positions: Individualism, Science, Visuality*. Stanford. Cal. Stanford University Press, 1996.

O'Hara, Diana. *Courtship and constraint: Rethinking the making of marriage in Tudor England*. Manchester. Manchester University Press. Distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press. 2000.

Oakley, Ann. 'A Brief History of Gender'. Eds. Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell. *Who's Afraid of Feminism: Seeing through the Backlash*. London. Penguin. 1998. 29-55.

Orgel, Stephen. 'The Poetics of Incomprehensibility'. *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 42. 1991. 431-437

Impersonations: The performance of gender in Shakespeare's England. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1996.

Ed. and intro. *The Winter's Tale*. Oxford. New York. Oxford University Press. 1996.

Parker, Patricia. *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*. London. New York.. Methuen. 1987.

Shakespeare from the Margins: Language, Culture, Context. Chicago. London. University of Chicago Press. 1996.

'Gender Ideology, Gender Change: The Case of Marie Germain', *Critical Inquiry* 19. Winter, 1999. 337-364.

Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy; A Literary, Psychological Essay and a Comprehensive Glossary*. London. Routledge. 1947.

Ed. Paul Beale. *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul. 8th edition. 1984.

Paster, Gail Kern. *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. Ithaca, N. Y. Cornell University Press. 1993.

Petrochenkov, Margaret M. *Pregnancy and Birth as a Metaphor for Literary Creativity*. A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Indiana University. 1993. Ann Arbor. Mich. University Microfilms International Dissertation Services. 1997.

Piesse, Amanda. 'Self-preservation in the Shakespearian System: Gender, Power and the New History'. Ed. and intro. Nigel Wood. *Measure for Measure*. Philadelphia. Open University Press. 1996. 44-89. Poovey, Mary. 'Recent Studies of Gender'. *Modern Philology*. 88:4. May, 1991. 415-420.

Rackin, Phyllis. 'Androgyny. Mimesis and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance stage'. Ed. *Speaking of Gender*. Elaine Showalter. New York. Routledge. 1989) 113-133.

Revel, Jacques. 'The Uses of Civility', Ed. Rogier Chartier. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. *A History of Private Life: Passions of the Renaissance*. Cambridge. Mass. London. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 1989. 163-205.

Ribeiro, Aileen and Valerie Cumming. *The Visual History of Costume*. London. B. T. Batsford. 1989.

Riddle, John. *Eve's Herbs: A History of Contraception and Abortion in the West*. Cambridge. Mass and London. Harvard University Press. 1997.

Robertson Davies, W. *Shakespeare's Boy Actors*. London. Dent. 1939.

- Rowe, George E. *Thomas Middleton and the New Comedy Tradition*. Lincoln Nebr. and London. University of Nebraska Press. 1979.
- Sackeld, Duncan. *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. Manchester and New York. Manchester University Press. 1993.
- Sacks, Elizabeth. *Shakespeare's Images Of Pregnancy*. New York. St Martin's Press. 1980.
- Showalter, Elaine. 'Introduction: The Rise of Gender', Ed. and intro. Elaine Showalter. *Speaking of Gender*. New York. London. Routledge. 1989. 1-13.
- Selzer, John L. 'Merit and Degree in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*'. Ed. and intro. Harold Bloom. *John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi*. New York. Chelsea House Publishers. 1987. 87-96.
- Shapiro, Michael. *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages*. Ann Arbor. Mich. University of Michigan Press. 1996.
- Sichel, Marion. *Costume Reference: Jacobean, Stuart and Restoration*. London. B. T. Batsford. 1977. Vol. 3.
- Smith, Bruce. 'Making a difference. Male/ male "desire" in tragedy, comedy and tragi-comedy'. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. London. Routledge. 1992. 27-146.
- Snyder, Susan. Ed. and intro. *All's Well That Ends Well*. Oxford. New York. Oxford University Press. 1993. Published as a World's Classics paperback. 1994.
- Sommerville, Margaret R. *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society*. London. New York. Arnold. 1995. Distributed in the USA by St Martin's Press. 174-186.
- Stallybrass, Peter and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. London. Methuen. 1986.
- Stallybrass, Peter. 'Transvestism and the "body beneath": Speculating on the boy actor'. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. New York. London. Routledge. 1992. 64-83.
- 'Worn worlds: clothes and identity on the Renaissance stage'. Eds and intro. Margreta de Grazia. Maureen Quilligan and Peter Stallybrass. *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*. Cambridge. New York. Cambridge University Press. 1996. 289-320.
- Stow, John. *The Survey of London*. Intro. Henry B. Wheatley. London. J. M. Dent. New York. E. P. Dutton, 1912. First published London. 1598. Rpt. London. 1603.
- Swinburne, Algernon. Intro. Ed. Havelock Ellis. *Thomas Middleton*. London. Vizetelly & Co. 1887.
- Tanner, J. M. *A history of the study of human growth*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 1981.
- The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments. In the King James Version*. New York. Thomas Nelson. 1977.
- Traub, Valerie. 'Jewels, Statues and Corpses: Containment of Female Erotic Power in Shakespeare's Plays'. Eds Valerie Traub, Deborah Barker and Ivo Kamps. *Shakespeare and Gender: A History*. London. New York. Verso. 1995.
- Trevelyan, G. M. *English Social History: A Survey of Six Centuries, Chaucer to Queen Victoria*. London. New York. Longman, Green & Co. 1944.

- White, R. S. 'The Moral Design of *The Duchess of Malfi*'. Ed. and intro. Dymphna Callaghan. *The Duchess of Malfi: Contemporary Critical Essays*. London. Macmillan. 2000. Distributed in the USA by St. Martin's Press. 201-216
- Wigham, Frank. 'Incest and Ideology: *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614)'. Eds. and intro. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass. *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*. New York. London. Routledge. 1991. 263-274.
- Wilson, Adrian. 'The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation'. Ed. and intro. Valerie Fildes. *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in memory of Dorothy McLaren*. London. New York.. Routledge. 1990.
- Wilson, Richard. *Will Power: Essays on Shakespearean Authority*. London. New York. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- Wilson-Knight, G. 'Helena', Ed. Kenneth Muir. *Shakespeare: The Comedies: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J. Prentice-Hall. 1965. 133-151.
- Woodbridge. Linda. *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind. 1540-1620*. Brighton. Harvester Press. 1984.
- Wunderli, Richard M. *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation*. Cambridge. Mass. The Medieval Academy of America. 1981.
- Zimmerman. Susan. 'Disruptive desire: Artifice and indeterminacy in Jacobean Comedy'. Ed. Susan Zimmerman. *Erotic politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*. New York. London. Routledge. 1992. 39-63.